



# An Evaluation of the Circles of Support and Accountability Demonstration Project

## **FINAL REPORT**

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# Introduction

This report describes the process and findings of an evaluation of a program known as Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA), an initiative that started in Canada and now has similar organisations in several countries around the world. The purpose of CoSA is to help recently released high risk sexual offenders (core members) re-enter society as law abiding citizens. CoSA have been shown to be a promising approach to reduce the likelihood of re-offending.

This evaluation was funded through a contribution agreement between Public Safety Canada and the Church Council on Justice and Corrections (CCJC) and was conducted by Jill Chouinard, PhD. It is based on information and data obtained from 14 CoSA sites located across Canada. This report is a valuable addition to the growing body of international research on similar CoSA programs. It provides an in depth look at the CoSA process in Canada and includes three individual site case studies. The case studies offer an in-depth look at what goes on in a CoSA Circle, something that has not been done before.

A close look at the inner workings of CoSA reveals a program that works with dedicated volunteers to provide vital integration support to individuals being released from federal correctional facilities into communities across Canada. These programs provide a necessary adjunct to formalized support structures through a focus on building supportive relationships between core members and circle volunteers.

Taken with other reports and evaluations of similar CoSA programs, indications are that CoSA provides an important addition to community safety and to the re-integration of high risk sexual offenders in Canada.

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) is a national program based on restorative justice principles designed to assist high-risk sexual offenders enter the community at the end of their sentence. The majority of sex offenders are released to the community at the end of their sentences, often without a formal process of community supervision. CoSA has been created to address this shortfall by providing support and accountability to high-risk sex offenders who have been designated as high -risk to reoffend, as well as to those who seem most likely to fail due to a lack of prosocial skills necessary for successful transition into a community at the end of their sentences. The CoSA model, which originated in Canada, has since been replicated in numerous countries in Western and Eastern Europe, the United States and Australia and New Zealand.

Since its original inception in 1994 in Ontario, CoSA has grown into a viable community partner in 18 communities across Canada, 13 of which have actively participated in the National Demonstration Project under the umbrella organization of the Church Council on Justice and Corrections, as funded through a contribution agreement with the National Crime Prevention Centre for a five year period. The Demonstration Project funding has enabled CoSA to grow substantially over the past five years, increasing the number of sex offenders (called core members), volunteers and community partners across all regions in Canada.

## Methodology

The national evaluation of the CoSA Demonstration Project was designed as a participatory approach involving key stakeholder groups, many of whom were actively involved

throughout the project as members of an Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC). All other site staff and relevant stakeholders were also involved in providing input and feedback throughout the process. The evaluation design was based on a mixed method model intended to measure both process- and outcome-level data, to determine the effectiveness of CoSA, and to identify factors that have hindered and/or supported its successful implementation across different settings. Process-level questions were designed to test the construct validity of the program theory, unravel what is happening in CoSA, by focusing on the details of the program, participant experiences, and major patterns and implementation issues across program sites. Process questions focus on how outcomes are produced. Outcome-level questions, on the other hand, focus on whether CoSA made a difference and assess expected and unexpected results across sites. The evaluation model has been further strengthened with case studies of three sites in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Ontario, all of which have helped to enhance our understanding of local context and of individual experiences within the program.

The final evaluation is based on multiple lines of evidence collected from January 2013-July 2014, which include a) program documentation (site records, monthly and quarterly indicator reports, program files, training materials, and extant literature); b) site profiles; c) STABLE 2007; d) circle volunteer and community service provider surveys; e) interviews with site coordinators, circle volunteers, core members, regional chaplains; f) circle volunteer journals; g) recidivism data (i.e. site records on condition breaches, sexual offending and non-sexual offending), and case studies.

## Evaluation Questions

### Process Questions

P-1 What is the program theory underlying CoSA? How do activities, outputs and outcomes inter-relate? Is the program theory consistent across program sites (program fidelity)? What are some notable differences across sites (e.g. balance between support and accountability)?

P-2 To what extent did the project reach its target population (CMs)? Why or why not? What changes must be made to reach the intended clientele more effectively?

P-3 How were project activities implemented across sites? What worked well? What challenges and barriers have emerged as the program has been implemented? How is program fidelity measured across sites?

P-4 How effective are CoSA's local governance structures (i.e. Advisory Panel, Steering Committee, Board of Directors) in supporting program planning, implementation and reporting?

P-5 What resources (human, financial and material) are available to CoSA initiatives? Are resources adequate to sustain current project commitments? To further expand participation in CoSA (volunteers and core members)?

P-6 How have connections with community services been initiated? How have these connections supported the work of CoSA sites?

P-7 What strategies are used to recruit and retain circle volunteers? What worked well? What challenges/barriers were identified?

P-8 To what extent was volunteer training adequate for the intervention?

P-9 What do core members and circle volunteers do in circles? What is working well (successes) and not working well?

### Outcome Questions

O-10 To what extent are program outcomes being attained? Were there any unintended outcomes experienced?

O-11 To what extent were micro-level outcomes being attained? What are the effects of the program on participants? Were there any unintended micro-level outcomes experienced?

O-12 What were the macro-level changes in recidivism and risk?

O-13 What is the cost effectiveness and cost benefit of the CoSA?

## Process Findings

Process-related questions are designed to test the validity of the program theory, unravel what is happening in CoSA, focus on the details of the program, participant experiences, and look at major patterns and implementation issues across program sites.

### Site-Specific Findings

*Extensive development of site governance structures.* Despite differences in governance models, we note overall that the governance structure of CoSA distinguishes it as a unique community and volunteer-based organization designed to address the various integration challenges associated with bringing sex offenders back into the community. Overall, the Demonstration Project has enabled the extensive development and expansion of governance structures for managing all CoSA sites.

*Implementation challenges.* Evaluation findings indicate that sites experienced a number of challenges related to project implementation: a) sites in large geographic areas experienced challenges coordinating community services for core members across large geographic boundaries, administering the site and maintaining clear communication among all stakeholders; b) volunteer retention was also identified as a challenge by some sites, particularly given the magnitude of the time and emotional commitment involved for circle volunteers. Some sites also noted retention issues with the lack of circles available for trained volunteers; c) other

sites noted challenges with adapting core member recruitment standards to fit with what sites have identified as 'NCPC criteria' and identifying motivated core members; d) others noted challenges with designing and adapting training materials specific to the diversity of volunteer information needs; e) some sites noted challenges involved in working with LTSO core members and potential negative effects on circle morale if they breach; f) all sites noted the different re-entry needs and associated challenges with LTSO and WED core members.

*Ongoing contact with community services.* CoSA sites use a two-pronged approach to initiate and maintain contacts with community services. On the one hand, sites ensure that steering committees are representative of the community as a way to ensure sustained contact with relevant services providers. Site coordinators also actively engage and network with the community and with community service providers on an ongoing basis.

*Recruitment practices (core member).* To identify and recruit core members, CoSA sites have worked actively at building relationships with federal, provincial and local institutions, and with building relationships with core members while they are still incarcerated. Findings indicate that half of core members are contacted before their release, with sites working with core members for approximately 10.7 months prior to their release dates. The majority of core members are recruited through relationships built with prison personnel and Chaplains, through halfway house contacts, and with parole and probation officers.

*Recruitment strategies (circle volunteers).* Recruitment strategies are considered a key part of all outreach activities. Sites use a combination of formal recruitment strategies (job fairs, universities) and informal strategies (community and faith-based connections, word of mouth). In terms of recruitment, we note that circle volunteers are motivated to get involved in CoSA in large part by their social principles and belief in restorative

justice. In terms of retention, circle volunteers describe fulfilling relationships that over time develop characteristics of reciprocity (Weaver, 2013) and a level of emotional investment and depth of caring (Weaver, 2013).

The proportion of circle volunteers to core members is consistent over time. The average number of volunteers/core members (3-5 volunteers/circle) is reflective of the literature on the number of circle volunteers required for an effective circle (Bates et al. (2012); Wilson et al. (2007). Despite this finding, volunteer recruitment is nonetheless highlighted as an ongoing challenge across a number of project sites. Sites experiencing volunteer recruitment challenges occasionally have a waiting list of core members; however, this is not in any way a constant situation as the ratio of available volunteers to core members changes on a regular basis.

*Volunteer training.* Although all sites provide training to volunteers, the specific approach taken varies across sites. Some sites provide an initial eight hours of training, whereas others provide over 16 to 20 hours. There are essentially two types of training offered: formal training that consists of basic and ongoing training, and informal training, which consists of on-the-job training.

Although site staff and circle volunteers note the importance of providing formal training to volunteers, the majority believe that the most important training is of an informal nature, occurring on-the-job, and facilitated by the participation of site staff in a circle and among circle volunteers (with a mix of new and more experienced volunteers). As one of the site coordinators observed, "The composition of the circle where more experienced are paired with less experienced volunteers, really provides new recruits with the confidence and learning that they need to be active circle volunteers."

## Circle Findings

*Evolution of a circle.* While the essential circle structure and definition is consistent across sites, we note that the evolution of circles differs from circle to circle, as well as across sites. Overall, circles are composed of three to five circle volunteers, with initial meetings occurring once/week, generally becoming less frequent over time. Meetings can occur as part of a formal circle or informally, or through involvement in outside recreational activities.

The average time core members spend in CoSA is approximately 36 months (min=0 months, max=186 months, st. deviation=37.0 months). Although circles change over time as the core member becomes more accustomed to being out in society, for many the circle never comes to an end, as the friendship and support provided remains one of the key resources available for core members.

In the initial stages, the circle is very focused on helping the core member adjust to the more practical issues related to life outside of prison (e.g. managing the conditions of 810 orders and LTSOs, finding housing, accessing food banks, obtaining employment, drivers' licenses, etc.). As the circle members become more familiar with one another, they can begin to address more complex issues (e.g. triggers for re-offending, danger of breaching, self-harm, family issues, self-pity, frustration and anger).

CoSA plays an essential role in providing primary support for integration to core members outside of more formalized support structures, a fact that seems to motivate core member commitment and continued involvement in CoSA. Both service providers and circle volunteers note that CoSA fills a gap between prison life and life after incarceration, what amounts to a valuable support service that is seen as standing outside the 'system', what one circle volunteer described as an intermediary role between legal/correctional services and integrating into society.

*Friendship as key to success.* The relationship between the core member and circle volunteers is essential to the success of CoSA (Weaver, 2013). For many of the core members we interviewed, the circle not only provides the support that they require to adjust to life outside prison, it also represents friendship in what is otherwise a very lonely and solitary existence. What starts off as an "intentional friendship" (Weaver, 2013) over time deepens to what for many circle volunteers and core members describe as a real friendship, a fact that may help explain the endurance of the relationship long after the circle has officially closed.

*The balance of support and accountability.* Interviews with circle volunteers further indicate that the balance between support and accountability depends on the needs of the core members, their experiences, and what they encounter in terms of their release conditions. We also note that at some CoSA sites, the balance between support and accountability evolves and shifts over time. Whereas initial circle conversations are more formal and related to accountability, as the circle progresses the conversation becomes more casual, depending upon the core member, the length of time in the circle, comfort levels and level of trust.

## **Outcome Findings**

Outcome-related questions focus on whether CoSA has made a difference in terms of outcomes and what the expected and unexpected results are across sites. The delineation of outcomes at the micro and macro levels is intended to help us capture a progression from immediate outcomes to those at a more macro level (e.g. in terms of recidivism and risk reductions; no more victims).

### Program-Level Outcomes

*The use of demonstration project funding* NCPC funding, as noted through interviews with site coordinators and case studies, has enabled CoSA sites to expand



their projects significantly, increasing the number of core members and circle volunteers, and develop extensive program infrastructures, establishing office and staff protocols, training materials, active boards of directors, active steering committees, and relationships with a broad range of community service providers and police/probation officers. However, while NCPC funding has enabled sites to achieve specific program outcomes in terms of the retention rates of circle volunteers, a sustainable ratio of circle volunteers to core members, and established institutional connections and support, it has not led to the identification of sustainable funding sources across project sites.

*Community networks.* Our findings indicate that NCPC funding has enabled sites to establish strong community and institutional connections and support over the period of the demonstration project. The establishment of partnerships supports the work of CoSA in terms of core member recruitment, circle volunteer recruitment, training, steering committee decision making and site governance, and with building linkages and awareness within the broader community.

#### Micro-Level (Core Member) Outcomes

For many core members, the transition from life in prison to life out in the community is challenging. CoSA provides many core members with the support (friendship, encouragement, motivation) and basic needs (food, shelter and health) that they require for life outside prison. Interviews with core members suggest that their experience in the circle is very reflective of how long they have spent in the prison system. The longer they have been incarcerated, the more institutionalized they will likely be, and hence the more reliant on their circle volunteers for helping them transition to life outside of prison.

Many core members also share similar challenges. Amongst the most common are loneliness and isolation, lack of employment, ongoing issues with drugs and alcohol, chronic health issues, lack

of community acceptance, lack of confidence, and living within the confines of their release conditions. Circles help address these issues by providing support, friendship, encouragement, the opportunity to reflect and vent, different points of view, and connections to community and health services.

Our findings further illustrate that changes in a core member's behaviour takes time and sustained effort, as well as significant community resources. At the same time, our findings confirm that despite all of the support and accountability provided in circles, there nonetheless remain limitations to integration. For example, housing, employment, and mental health concerns often pose on-going challenges for many core members. The fact that circle volunteers continue to provide friendship and support long after a formal circle has closed, may be an indication that the core member still has ongoing needs that are not being met outside CoSA.

#### Macro-Level (Recidivism, Risk and Integration) Outcomes

*Recidivism.* This analysis is based on data collected from CoSA sites regarding whether or not core members had been charged or convicted of a reoffense (sexual or non-sexual), and/or breached conditions during their time in CoSA. Further background information on release date, release status, victim target population, whether or not the core member was a repeat offender, circle start and end date, and number of months incarcerated after breach/reoffense were collected. More precisely, the rates computed here can be described as "time-in-CoSA" recidivism rates.

The primary limitation of this line of evidence is that the data is site-reported and therefore only includes recidivistic events occurring during the core members' time in CoSA. It is therefore an underestimation of true recidivism rates, which was beyond the scope of this evaluation since official records such as CPIC and OMS take over

a year to update, and the five-year period of the Demonstration Project is not long enough to perform an actual recidivism analysis.

The site-reported data on sexual reoffending incidents were used to conduct a survival analysis to determine the rates of recidivism while core members were involved in a CoSA: 2.0% over three years; 5.6% over five years; and 9.5% over ten years. To determine the percent reduction in sexual offending (i.e., CoSA vs. Non-CoSA), these CoSA recidivism rates were then compared to the following normative baseline rates, which were obtained from longitudinal follow-up studies on sex offenders released into the community (Hanson, Harris, Helmus & Thornton, 2014; Wilson, Cortoni & McWhinnie, 2009): 27.78% over three years; 22% over five years; and 28.8% over 10 years. Therefore, during the period in which core members are involved in a CoSA, the relative reduction in sexual offending is 92.8% over three years, 74.5% over five years, and 67.0% over ten years. It is also important to note that core members who entered a CoSA prior to the Demonstration Project were included in this analysis in order to calculate the five and ten year rates.

*Stable 2007.* This evaluation also used the STABLE 2007 assessment to a) enable sites to address the key risk domains in a standardized and systematic way and, b) to assess whether risk decreased over time. Although this evaluation did not identify any significant reduction in STABLE scores during this time, there was a near-significant (1.30 ( $p=0.0538$ )) reduction in scores in LTSO core members between the initial and final assessment. Nonetheless, sites noted the impact of the process of completing the STABLE 2007 assessment:

- It created an appreciation for the consistency the tool provided in examining where core members are at six-month intervals.
- It generated a useful picture of how core members are doing.
- It provided some questions that will be

routinely used to help the circle gain a better understanding of the core member.

Thus, while we are unable to use the findings from the STABLE to draw any conclusion in this evaluation, we nonetheless note one of the consequences of participating in the evaluation (e.g., completing the STABLE assessments) illustrates an example of “process use” (Patton, 2008), whereby participants, through engagement in the evaluation, learn from the evaluation process itself.

*Success.* A secondary macro-level change is the extent to which core members successfully integrate or become part of a community as a result of their participation in CoSA. An important finding in this evaluation is that overall success cannot be determined or judged based on the number of core members who “graduate” out of a circle. For many core members, CoSA has provided them with the support and friendship required to enable them to live independently (to varying degrees) and within what is essentially an intentional community, a CoSA community.

#### Economic Analysis

A cost-effective and cost-benefit analysis was conducted as part of the evaluation in order to give a sense of the economic efficiency of CoSA. In a time of fiscal constraint, it is important to understand how much money needs to be spent on a program in order to achieve the desired outcome (cost-effectiveness), and whether or not the program yields savings to society through the crimes prevented (cost-benefit).

Since accurate program expenditure records could only be obtained for the period between May 2008 and September 2014, it was necessary to calculate another five-year recidivism rate to match this period. Essentially, only core members who started a CoSA between May 2008 and May 2014 were included in this analysis. The five-year CoSA recidivism rate for this analysis is 10.1%.

This rate was then compared with the most recent (and predominantly Canadian) recidivism study: *High-Risk Sex Offenders May not be High Risk Forever*, by Hanson, Harris, Helmus & Thornton (2014) to determine the number of recidivistic events that could potentially be prevented had the high-risk offenders in the Hanson et al. (2014) study been in a CoSA. Hanson et al. (2014) found the recidivism rate for high-risk offenders (n=1,992) after five years to be 22.0%. Knowing these two rates, the number of potential recidivistic events prevented was calculated to be 240.43. Furthermore, the program expenditures between May 2008 and September 2014 were \$12,696,517.45.

With this data, the cost-effectiveness ratio of CoSA was calculated to be \$52,806.60. That is, for CoSA to prevent one recidivistic event within five years the cost is \$52,806.60. This analysis was further extended by calculating the cost-benefit ratio of CoSA. This was determined using the most recent estimate of the cost of a rape/sexual assault crime from McHollister, French & Fang (2010) of \$240,776.00. Therefore, every dollar invested in CoSA to prevent one recidivistic event within five years is worth \$4.60 in savings to society (in terms of the tangible and intangible costs of a rape/sexual assault crime).

## Conclusions

The following conclusions are derived through the integration, synthesis and triangulation across evidence derived from the findings as they relate to each of the evaluation's specific questions.

- In this evaluation we found that CoSA likely adds to the reduction in the number of recidivistic events among core members while they remain involved in CoSA.
- Although we found that CoSA has a positive effect on recidivism insofar as it would appear to reduce the rate of recidivism among its core members, the extent to which core members are integrated with society remains unclear. This

is an area that requires further definition and research. For instance, what do we mean by the phrase, "integrated with society"? Is it a valid criterion? We found integration to be related to length of incarceration, past familial and childhood history, level of mental functioning, level of risk, and ultimately an individual's social capital.

- What CoSA does really well, is to help core members transition from incarceration to living within a community, helping to meet their basic physical, emotional, and social needs, providing role modeling of healthy, prosocial behaviors, and ultimately building social capital. Based on principles of a general personality and social psychology of criminal conduct, and social network theory, we can make clear connections between initial influencing variables (where the core member comes from, etc.), the structure and characteristics that define the circle, the circle dynamics themselves, leading to specified outcomes, which also include varying levels of integration for core members. Thus, it seems the concept of 'integration' itself must be considered along a continuum, from full integration to partial or little integration, and what reasonable expectations for high-risk sexual offenders might look like. It is precisely this point that needs further study.

- The cost-effectiveness ratio of CoSA is \$52,806.00. This is the amount of money that needs to be spent on a single circle over five years for CoSA to achieve the project results; more precisely, the average expenditure per unit outcome. The cost-benefit ratio of CoSA is \$4.60. This is an extension of the cost-effectiveness ratio and goes further to indicate that every dollar invested in CoSA to prevent a recidivistic event is worth \$4.60 in savings to society in terms of justice system costs, medical costs, loss of productivity, and pain and suffering.

- The Demonstration Project provides evidence that additional resources will ensure project growth in terms of project infrastructure, increased number of core members and circle volunteers, and stronger and broader connections with community service providers. It must be noted that the Demonstration Project funding has apparently not yet succeeded in establishing the long term sustainability of CoSAs across the country, and as such, many sites have had to scale back much of the progress they have made over the last five years.

The challenge of ensuring funding for a highly stigmatized population (i.e., sexual offenders) will continue to be a challenging prospect in terms of finding a balance between providing additional resources to allow CoSA to grow, and of addressing the real challenges of restorative justice through broadening community understanding and awareness.

- CoSA works because of the relationships established in the circles. Core members come out of prison with no family, friends, or support in society; many of them are institutionalized after having spent many years in prison; many have a history of sexual abuse and deprived upbringings. CoSA works in large part because, for many core members, this is the first time in their lives that they are engaging in healthy relationships with people who genuinely care about their well-being (and who aren't being paid to spend time with them). And so, it is the relationship itself, as well as its volunteer nature that is fundamental to CoSA's success.
- CoSA's circle volunteers are highly committed, compassionate advocates for the work that they do in circle with core members, and highly committed to restorative justice principles. As such, circle volunteers are ultimately CoSA's greatest asset.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were provided by EAC members, the majority of whom participated in a final telephone conference call in September 2014.

- Most of the quantitative data included in this evaluation came directly from individual CoSA sites, a fact that impacted its overall use and reliability. To ensure that future evaluations have the data required to evaluate recidivism rates and conduct a long-term recidivism study with official records (CPIC, OMS data), an arrangement between interested/governing agencies needs to be negotiated as soon as possible to ensure that this data is collected and maintained centrally.
- Future evaluations should ensure equal focus on French and Atlantic regions. This was lacking in this evaluation as the CSRQ case study was not completed. Furthermore, at the start of the evaluation it was deemed necessary to choose only large sites for case studies; however, in hindsight, it would have been equally enlightening to study a small or new site. Future evaluations should include a greater cross-section of sites, including those that are less developed or just getting underway.
- STABLE: This evaluation only used the STABLE 2007 assessment to better understand changes over time on clinically relevant factors associated with sexual offending behavior. We note that the STABLE 2007 can also be used to guide the circle and respond to an individual's criminogenic needs. Although we did note that this was beginning to happen in some sites, this finding was not captured formally within the context of this evaluation. We recommend that future evaluations further study the potential impact the STABLE 2007 has on circle functioning. At the same time, we would recommend that everyone involved in collecting STABLE data on core members receive the same level of training and ensure training is provided on an ongoing (as needed) basis.

- This evaluation just touched on the concept of ‘integration’. We recommend that future evaluations further define and measure the extent to which core members integrate in a) the CoSA community and b) the community in general, perhaps using social network theory as a point of departure.
- Given the challenges we experienced in collecting accurate and comprehensive data from individual sites, we would recommend that in future, sites devote more time to record keeping to ensure that future evaluations will have the data required for the evaluation.

## List of Key Acronyms and Definitions

### **810** The 810

This allows the court to restrict a person's movements and behaviour when there are reasonable grounds to fear that a person will commit a sex offence against someone under the age of 14. The 810.2 order focuses on violent offenders, including sex offenders. These orders can be made for a maximum of two years. Conditions can be attached to these orders and a breach of an 810 order constitutes an offence.

### **CCJC** Church Council on Justice and Corrections

A national faith-based coalition of churches, which promotes community responsibility for justice with an emphasis on addressing the needs of victims and offenders, mutual respect, healing, individual accountability, and crime prevention.

### **CM** Core Member

The primary person for whom the circle has been formed. The core member is the ex-offender.

### **CV** Circle Volunteer

These volunteers are people from the community who have given their time to provide friendship, emotional support, and accountability to the core member.

### **LTSO** Long Term Supervision Order

This designation is given to individuals convicted of a "serious personal injury offence" who, on the evidence, are likely to re-offend. Offenders who can be managed through a regular sentence, along with a specific period of federal supervision in the community, can be designated a long term offender, which can result in a term of supervision of up to 10 years after an offender's release.

### **NCPC** National Crime Prevention Centre Public Safety Canada's National Crime Prevention

Centre provides national leadership on effective and cost-effective ways to prevent and reduce crime by intervening on the risk factors before crime happens.

### **WED** Warrant Expiry Date

This is the date on which a sentence imposed by the sentencing judge ends. This is the last day that the Correctional Service of Canada has jurisdiction over an offender.

# Introduction

## Background

In August of 2012, the lead evaluator was contacted by the Saskatchewan Justice Institute, University of Regina, to provide input on the evaluation plan that their institute was contracted to complete for the Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) national demonstration project. The lead evaluator ultimately took over the work on the evaluation plan (Chouinard, 2012), which was completed in November 2012 for the Church Council on Justice and Corrections (CCJC). The following evaluation of CoSA, with some modifications, is based on the original evaluation plan submitted in November 2012 and covers the period from December 2012 to July 2014.

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) is a national demonstration project based on restorative justice principles designed to assist high-risk sexual offenders enter the community at the end of their sentence. The majority of sexual offenders, after completion of their sentences, are released to the community, some without a formal process of community supervision. CoSA was created to provide support and accountability to high-risk sex offenders who have been designated as a high risk to reoffend, as well as those who seem most likely to fail due to a lack of prosocial support and skills needed to facilitate their integration into the community at the end of their sentence. Many of these sexual offenders have a long history of offending, have failed in treatment, have displayed intractable antisocial values and attitudes, and are likely to be held until their warrant expiry date (WED) because of high levels of risk and criminogenic need. Ironically, it is precisely these sexual offenders who are most in need of community supervision and professional attention who are released without support (Wilson, McWhinnie, Picheca, Prinzo & Cortoni, 2007). Therefore, upon release,

these offenders face significant challenges. The goal of CoSA is thus to “promote successful integration of released men with communities by providing support, advocacy, and a way to be meaningfully accountable in exchange for living safely.” (CSC, 2002). As Hannem (2011) explains, “the role of CoSA in the lives of core members and in communities is complex and multifaceted. In a society that demands accountability and harsh consequences for crime, CoSA’s restorative response to the ‘worst of the worst’ is exceptional (p. 278).”

CoSA was originally conceived in 1994 as an ad hoc response by a Mennonite pastor in Ontario after a low functioning, high-risk, repeat child sexual abuser was released to the community after completing his sentence in a federal penitentiary. According to Wilson, Picheca & Prinzo (2005), the community response to his release was immediate: picketing, calls for political intervention, media attention, and 24-hour police surveillance. In response to the offender’s need for assistance, the pastor gathered a group of congregants to offer the offender both humane support and a realistic accountability framework. After a similar intervention with another offender in a neighbouring community a few months later, with assistance from the Mennonite Central Committee of Ontario (MCCO), the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) sponsored a pilot project called the Community Reintegration Project to explore whether this approach to community reintegration could be operationalized and more broadly implemented, ultimately leading to the birth of Circles of Support and Accountability (see Silverman & Wilson, 2002; Wilson, Huculak & McWhinnie, 2002).

While CoSA was born in response to unique circumstances, it has also acted as a template for similar initiatives in the United Kingdom (Nellis, 2009; Wilson, Bates & Vollm, 2010), Europe (Dreidger, 2011; Hoing, 2011), and in several jurisdictions in the United States (e.g. Duwe, 2012). Other countries, such as Ireland, New Zealand, The Netherlands, France, Italy, and Spain are evaluating whether CoSA is able to reduce the risk of recidivism among sexual offenders returning to their respective communities (see Clark, 2011; Richards, 2011). As Wilson et al., (2007) explain, “what started out as an *ad hoc* response to a difficult situation has become something of an international *cause célèbre* in the toolbox of innovative community options for managing sexual offender risk (p. 7).”

While CoSA is based on restorative justice principles<sup>1</sup>, the strength of the model is based on its volunteers (Wilson, McWhinnie & Wilson, 2008), as each circle involves the participation of three to five volunteers who in turn provide support for the ex-offender (referred to as a Core member)<sup>2</sup> in his/her transition to the community. All volunteers are trained to ensure that they understand the roles and responsibilities associated with assisting and holding accountable high-risk sexual offenders in the community (Wilson et al., 2005). In addition to this inner circle (consisting of volunteers and a Core member), there is also an outer circle of supportive community-based professionals that include psychologists, law enforcement officers, correctional officials, Aboriginal organizations, Business Associations, religious and non-faith-based agencies, and social service workers, who support the work of the inner circle. These two

circles, understood as an inner circle and an outer circle, are co-ordinated in their activities by a local CoSA Coordinator.

Since the first CoSA project was established in 1994, there have been two formal evaluations of CoSA in Canada, in 2005 and 2007 respectively, both of which focused upon the impact of CoSA on recidivism rates among sexual offenders, as well as impacts on volunteers and community members at large.. Results of both evaluations (Wilson et al., 2005; Wilson et al., 2009) showed a significant reduction (70% and 83%) in rates of sexual reoffending among Core members, as compared to that of matched comparison counterparts who were not involved in CoSA. Results of these two evaluations were further corroborated in the interim results of CoSA UK showing marked reductions in reoffending through participation in CoSA projects (Bates, Williams, Wilson & Wilson, 2013)). In addition, a recent evaluation of a CoSA randomized trial in Minnesota confirmed a causal impact of the program on recidivism showing no re-arrests for sexual offending in the treatment group (Duwe, 2012).

### Program Description

Since its original inception in 1994, CoSA has grown into a viable community partner in 18 communities across Canada. Of these 18 sites, 13 are participating in a National Demonstration Project under the umbrella organization of the Church Council on Justice and Corrections<sup>3</sup> (CCJC), funded through a contribution agreement with the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC). The budget, totaling approximately

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<sup>1</sup> Restorative Principles in this context are understood as collaboration, dialogue, reparation, rehabilitation, participation, respect, reciprocity, responsibility, empathy, consensus-building, healing, empowerment, transformation, and hope (Wilson, Huculak & McWhinnie, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Core Members are federally-sentenced sex offenders who have been detained (i.e., CCRA, II, 129[1ff]0, and who have been released to the community at the end of their sentences (i.e., Warrant Expiry Date, or WED; CCRA, II, 130[3]) and those sex offenders who have reached the end of their sentences at WED, yet have by way of court order under s. 753.1 of the Criminal Code of Canada, been required to be supervised in the community as a result of a Long Term Supervision Order (LTSO). Core members are usually adult males; no young offenders are part of the national demonstration project.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/the-church-council-on-justice-and-corrections/>



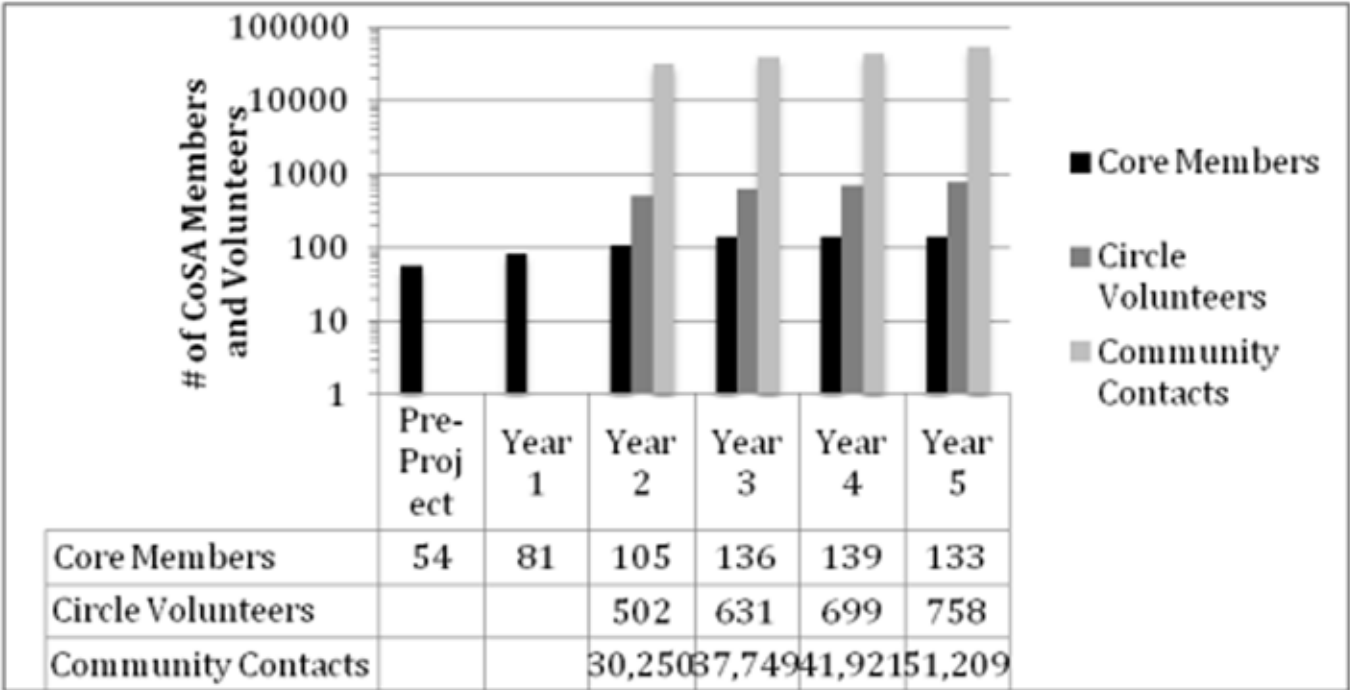
7.4 million dollars, covers the period from October 1, 2009 to December 31, 2014. These funds complement existing funding from different community partners, whose combined contribution was \$4,192,742.45 during the five-year period of the project.

The CoSA projects participating in the national demonstrations are located in eight provinces across Canada: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Québec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Whereas all CoSA sites have somewhat distinct policies or procedures, and articulate slightly different philosophies about the nature of their services (Rugge & Gutierrez, 2010), all share a set of basic principles and values, with the common goal of

protecting the community while assisting sexual offenders in entering society. All participating sites further agreed to follow the parameters of the demonstration project and evaluation in exchange for secured funding over the five-year period.

As Figure 1 shows, the Demonstration Project funding has enabled CoSA to reach optimum operational capacity over the past five years. Through data collected in the evaluation and quarterly indicator reports completed throughout the project, Figure 1 shows how the numbers of core members, circle volunteers, and community partners has grown from pre-project (before October 2009), through to May 2014 (halfway through the fifth year of the Demonstration Project).

Figure 1. Site growth



## Evaluation Purpose

The national evaluation of the CoSA Demonstration Project was designed as a participatory evaluation using a mixed method approach to measure both outcome- and process-level questions. While there have been two previous evaluations of CoSA (at the national level) within Canada, both were based on quasi-experimental designs intended to capture, among other things, recidivism rates among sex offenders. What sets this evaluation apart is the adoption of a participatory approach, where evaluators work in partnership with program stakeholders to produce evaluative knowledge, build evaluation capacity, enhance organizational learning and understanding of context, and enhance understanding and use of evaluation findings (Cousins and Chouinard, 2012). Additionally, this evaluation has been designed as a mixed method approach to determine the effectiveness of CoSA and identify factors that have hindered and/or supported its successful implementation across different settings. A case study approach (at both the site and core member levels) further enhances understanding of context and of individual experiences within the program.

## Uses and Users of the Evaluation

The primary intended uses of the evaluation include instrumental uses, where evaluation results could directly influence the implementation of CoSA; conceptual uses, where results might indirectly influence CoSA through learning; and process uses, where participation in the evaluation might lead to organizational and individual learning outcomes (Cousins, 2003; Cousins & Chouinard, 2012).

In an effort to facilitate and increase the likelihood of evaluation use and impact, as well as increase the potential for learning, a participatory process was used to engage relevant stakeholders throughout the evaluation process (Cousins, 2003; Cousins & Chouinard, 2012; Cousins & Earl, 1992). As

noted in the Final Evaluation Plan: Circles of Support and Accountability (Chouinard, 2012), a participatory evaluation, where evaluators work in partnership with stakeholders to produce evaluation knowledge, can help build evaluation capacity, enhance organizational learning and understanding of context, address professional development requirements and enhance understanding and use of evaluation findings (Cousins & Chouinard, 2012).

The primary intended users of the evaluation make diverse groups, each with its own specific information needs. Examples would be NCPC, CSC, CPS, and the Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada at the federal level, local CoSA sites, and the research community at both national and international levels.

## Evaluation Questions

The evaluation questions are balanced between process-focused questions and outcome-focused questions. Process questions are designed to test the construct validity of the program theory, unravel what is happening in CoSA, focus on the details of the program, participant experiences, and major patterns and implementation issues across program sites. Process questions essentially focus on how outcomes are produced. Outcome questions, on the other hand, focus on whether CoSA made a difference and assess expected and unexpected results across sites.

### Process Questions

**P-1** What is the program theory underlying CoSA? How do activities, outputs and outcomes interrelate? Is the program theory consistent across program sites (program fidelity)? What are some notable differences across sites (e.g. balance between support and accountability)?

**P-2** To what extent did the project reach its target population (CMs)? Why or why not? What changes must be made to reach the intended clientele more effectively?

**P-3** How were project activities implemented across sites? What worked well? What challenges and barriers have emerged as the program has been implemented? How is program fidelity measured across sites?

**P-4** How effective are CoSA's local governance structures (i.e. Advisory Panel, Steering Committee, Board of Directors) in supporting program planning, implementation and reporting?

**P-5** What resources (human, financial and material) are available to CoSA initiatives? Are resources adequate to sustain current project commitments? To further expand participation in CoSA (volunteers and core members)?

**P-6** How have connections with community services been initiated? How have these connections supported the work of CoSA sites?

**P-7** What strategies are used to recruit and retain circle volunteers? What worked well? What challenges/barriers were identified?

**P-8** To what extent was volunteer training adequate for the intervention?

**P-9** What do core members and circle volunteers do in circles? What is working well (successes) and not working well?

## Outcome Questions

**O-10** To what extent are program outcomes being attained? Were there any unintended outcomes experienced?

**O-11** To what extent were micro-level outcomes being attained? What are the effects of the program on participants? Were there any unintended micro-level outcomes experienced?

**O-12** What were the macro-level changes in recidivism and risk?

**O-13** What is the cost effectiveness and cost benefit of the CoSA?

# Methods

## Evaluation Approach

As a national program with 13 participating sites across the country and a multiple and diverse group of stakeholders, the approach selected for this evaluation was based on participatory principles as a way to involve relevant stakeholders proactively in the evaluation process. To facilitate this approach, the existing Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC) was expanded to include four CoSA site coordinators, as well as stakeholders from other areas. While the EAC was not responsible for actually implementing the evaluation project, it played an important role at the start of the evaluation in determining the focus of the evaluation, in negotiating participation, as well as in providing ongoing input and feedback on data collection, analysis, and dissemination of evaluation findings.

The four site coordinators on the EAC were actively involved in assisting evaluators in many aspects and phases of the evaluation, such as identifying interview participants (core members, circle volunteers), collecting relevant, detailed program material and information on core members, and contextualizing and understanding findings.

The participatory approach was further modified to include all site staff and other relevant stakeholders who attended CoSA Gatherings in 2013 and 2014, where they were all actively involved in providing input and feedback, essentially validating preliminary evaluation findings.

## Evaluation Design

This evaluation used a mixed method design with embedded case studies in order to capture both process and outcome data involving core members,

circle volunteers, and site functioning from 13 Demonstration Project sites: Vancouver/Fraser Valley, Calgary, South Saskatchewan, Winnipeg, South Western Ontario, Peterborough, Kingston, Ottawa, MSCM Montreal, CSRQ Montreal, CJPM Montreal, Moncton, and Halifax.

Multiple lines of evidence were collected through a) program documentation (site records, monthly and quarterly indicator reports, program files, training materials, and extant literature), b) site profiles, c) STABLE 2007, d) circle volunteer and community service provider surveys, e) interviews with site coordinators, circle volunteers, core members, and regional chaplains, f) circle volunteer journals, f) estimates of recidivism data (i.e. site records on condition breaches, sexual offending and non-sexual offending), g) embedded case studies (both site and core member). All surveys and interview guides are provided in Appendix D.

## Sample Selection

All of the people who participated in this evaluation were selected because of their involvement in CoSA.

*Interviewee selection.* All site staff were interviewed and two out of five Regional Chaplains were interviewed based on a convenience sample. The sample of core members and circle volunteers was selected randomly; however, if participation was declined, usually for reasons of convenience, then another participant was selected until the sampling quota was filled.

*Site case study selection.* Originally, four case studies were selected. It was determined by the EAC that case studies should:

1) represent a good cross-section of the Canadian experience with CoSA.

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4 The sites in Atlantic Canada (Halifax, Moncton) have too few core members (three in total), and so have not been selected as case study sites.

2) provide a mix of French, English, and Aboriginal.

3) provide a blend of urban and rural experiences.

4) represent the five regions of Canada (Ontario, Quebec, Prairies, Western Canada, Atlantic Canada<sup>4</sup>).

Based on these four criteria, the following four sites were originally selected: CSRQ (Quebec); SWON (English); Regina (Prairie/Aboriginal); Vancouver (Western/urban) and Fraser Valley (rural). However, due to scheduling issues, we were unable to complete the CSRQ case study in the required time. The interviews with core member and circle volunteers from this site were nonetheless incorporated into the overall analysis.

*Core member case study selection.* Three to five core members from each case study site were purposely selected to be part of a core member case study. The selection was based on availability, willingness to participate in the evaluation, and type of index offence and release status to ensure variety. The purpose of the core member case studies is to provide context to the evaluation through insight into the past experiences of the core members, to what extent CoSA has had an impact on their lives, and the ongoing challenges each of them faces.

Table 1. Summary of data collection methods and sample selection

Data Collection Method	Sample	Number (n=xx)	Collection Period
All CoSA Sites			
Interviews	Site Staff Regional Chaplains	n=14 n=2	Feb 2013 June-Aug 2013
On-line survey	All circle volunteers All community service providers	n=301 n=178	Mar-Apr 2013
Program documentation and Site Profiles	All available documentation (e.g., monthly reports, etc.)		Jan-May 2013
STABLE 2007 assessment	VFV Calgary South Saskatchewan Winnipeg MCC SWON Peterborough Kingston Ottawa MSCM CSRQ CJPM Moncton Halifax	n= 8 n= 6 n= 0 n= 4 n= 31 n= 4 n= 5 n= 5 n= 8 n= 12 n= 0 n= 4 n= 4 Total= 91 * 'n' only includes all three rounds completed for CMs with valid background data	First round: Apr-May 2013 Second round: Oct-Nov 2013 Third round: May-June 2014
Recidivism data	All core members	n=251	May-June 2014
Site Case Studies			
Interviews	Circle volunteers Site staff	n=26 n=3	First round: Feb 2013 Second round: Dec 2013

<b>Data Collection Method</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Number (n=xx)</b>	<b>Collection Period</b>
Circle volunteer journals	VFV South Saskatchewan MCC SWON	n=4 n=3 n=2	First round: Sept 2013 Second round: May 2014
Program documentation	All available documentation (e.g., monthly reports, etc.)		Jan 2013-Jan 2014
Core Member Case Studies			
Interviews	VFV South Saskatchewan MCC SWON	n=3 n=3 n=3	First round: June-July 2013 Second round: Dec 2013 – Mar 2014 Third round: June-July 2014

## Data Collection and Analysis

*Surveys.* Two anonymous online surveys were developed in both English and French using FluidSurveys software<sup>5</sup> for circle volunteers and community service providers. Both were composed of open- and closed-ended questions. The link to the online survey was sent via email to all site coordinators who disseminated it to all the circle volunteers and community service providers at their site. A hard copy version was also available, and where it was used instead of the online method, it was mailed to the evaluators who then entered the responses into the software manually. The survey was open between March and April of 2013. Response rates were 42% for circle volunteers and 27% for community service providers.

The circle volunteer data was analyzed as an aggregate and the FluidSurveys software was used to determine descriptive statistics relating to recruitment, motivation, satisfaction, and training; correlations were also made between retention and training and support, volunteer satisfaction and training, and training and circle dynamics.

The community service providers survey was also analyzed as an aggregate, using the FluidSurveys software to calculate descriptive statistics regarding the nature of involvement, services offered, levels of satisfaction. Open-ended questions in both surveys were coded and themes identified by the evaluators.

*Program documentation and site profiles.* Program documentation was collected from each site and organized into ‘Site Profiles’ for a comparative analysis of how each site functions in terms of differing protocols and values, and for an overall illustration of the site. The following are the types of documents collected and analyzed: site records, monthly and quarterly indicator reports, training material, promotional material, job descriptions, historical literature, steering committee minutes, recruiting and screening protocols, and extant literature.

*Key informant interviews.* Interviews were conducted with 14 site staff, 26 circle volunteers, 37 core members, and two regional chaplains. Interview guides were semi-structured and the interviews ranged from 20 to 75 minutes. Interviews were

<sup>5</sup> <http://fluidsurveys.com>

transcribed selectively or verbatim, and were either conducted by telephone or in person. Data from each question were aggregated into a table format and analyzed for common responses. Consent forms for all interviews are provided in Appendix E.

*Observed recidivism data.* Data on each core member since the start of the project were collected to determine the following: time-at-risk for reoffence (defined as the amount of time a core member has been simultaneously involved in a CoSA and at risk for reoffence in the community); 3, 5, and 10-year recidivism rates (determined using data on core members who started both before and during the Demonstration Project); core member victim types (i.e., males under 13, females under 13, males 14-18, females 14-18, males 19+, females 19+); circle start and exit dates, and reason for circle exits. Chi-square and Fisher's Exact analyses were conducted to compare rates of core member breaches and reoffences, and whether or not reoffences were committed most often by repeat offenders. The differences in victim target populations (i.e., male under 13, female under 13, male 14-18, female 14-18, male over 19, female over 19) when breaches occurred were also compared.

Time to reoffence was estimated using the Kaplan-Meier survival plots (allowing for censored<sup>6</sup> observations) to determine 3, 5, and 10-year recidivism rates by comparing the distribution of the cumulative proportions of core members "surviving" without sexual reoffence; all core members were included in this analysis. Survival

refers to the length of time a core member has remained in the community offence-free, with our observation period for the current study confined to the time the core member was involved in CoSA. The mean observation period (time in CoSA while at risk for reoffence) is 33.7 months  $\pm$ 35.5 months.

These data were collected either through phone conversations with site staff or through email communication with site staff between April and May of 2014. Data were assembled in an Excel spreadsheet and then imported into SPSS version 19.0.0.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL) for analysis.

*Stable 2007.* The stable assessment is designed to evaluate changes in stable and dynamic risk factors over time, and the extent to which they contributed to potential changes in risk to reoffend sexually. It includes the following fifteen items: significant social influences, capacity for relationships, emotional identification with children, hostility towards women, general social rejection/loneliness, lack of concern for others, impulsiveness, poor problem solving skills, negative emotionality/hostility, sex drive/sex preoccupation, sex as coping, deviant sexual preference, cooperation with supervision, victim access, and substance abuse. Items are then rated as: no problem (0), may be a problem (1), or definitely a problem (2).

Site staff were trained on administration and scoring the Stable 2007 at the 2012 fall annual gathering of CoSA personnel by Dr. R.J. Wilson, a qualified Stable 2007 "train-the-trainer"

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<sup>6</sup> Ideally, all individual cases within a given survival analysis are accessible throughout the entire time horizon of the study, and exit the sample only as a result of experiencing the event of interest (e.g., recidivism). Unfortunately, however, real applications of survival analysis are rarely straightforward. Individuals are usually lost throughout the study period for reasons other than a recidivistic event. In the case of the CoSA program, which has a rolling intake design, follow-up times vary widely across CMs, ranging from ten years to one year or less. In addition, CMs may drop out of the program at any point and are therefore inaccessible through all but official police and corrections records (which were not available for the current study). Therefore, not all CMs are able to be observed throughout the entire time horizon of the analysis (e.g., whether 3 years, 5 years, or 10 years), in order to determine if a sexual or other type of offence has taken place. Nonetheless, one does not want to simply remove such cases from the analysis, as critical information would be lost. Rather, the idea is to observe all cases as long as possible, treating individuals who become unavailable within a given time period as "censored" beyond that period; in other words, their trajectories (i.e., either offended or offence-free) are considered blocked from further follow-up (Klein & Moeschberger, 2003; Prinja, Gupta, & Verma, 2010; Sedgwick, 2013).

instructor. The Stable 2007 was administered by site staff to all core members (who were present at first round) at three intervals: April-May 2013, Oct-Nov 2013, and May-Jun 2014. Completed assessments were sent to the evaluators by mail or email, and scores were entered into an excel spreadsheet then imported into SPSS (version 19.0.0.0) for analysis. Stable scores for each core member were mapped to the background recidivism data (release status, repeat offender status, victim target population, and time at risk) collected for each core member to give a more complete analysis.

Given the very short time span between the test intervals (13 months), it was not expected that any significant changes in Stable scores would be observed. However, it was noted by the Evaluation Advisory Committee and the Evaluation Team that the evaluation did not have any empirically validated, objective measure of change in criminogenic needs associated with sexual reoffending. It was for this reason that training was provided and CoSA practice enhanced through the uses of the Stable 2007.

A repeated measures ANOVA was used to determine if there were differences in STABLE scores across the three assessments, and across the three assessments with respect to time at risk up until May 2014. The mean STABLE score change between the initial assessment and the final assessment was calculated. We used a one tailed t-test to determine if there was a difference in the mean STABLE score change between LTSO and WED/810 core members. We used ANOVA to determine if there were any differences between STABLE score changes with respect to victim type or the number of years core members were at risk. Finally, we used ANOVA to determine if there was a correlation between core members' time at risk (i.e., time in CoSA) and the final STABLE score.

*Case studies.* Two types of case studies were employed: Site case studies and core member case studies.

Site case studies were developed using at least three lines of evidence: interviews with site staff, circle volunteers, and core members, circle volunteer journals, and site documentation. See individual case studies in the attached document for a complete list of the lines of evidence, which differ slightly for each case study. The purpose of the site case studies was to illustrate the differing contexts, and functioning of sites. Case studies were developed with the same guidelines provided to each site. While each site developed its own style for completing the site case studies, the information needed for the purposes of this evaluation was submitted, although in somewhat different format. Site case studies were analyzed in accordance with the themes developed for evaluation; contextual illustrations from the case studies have been included throughout the report to provide depth.

*Circle volunteer journals.* Journals were voluntarily completed by circle volunteers at case study sites. Journals were submitted by mail or email at two intervals: September 2013 and May 2014. Journals were then analyzed for themes indicative of site functioning, circle functioning, circle challenges, and core member outcomes that could contribute to each case study.



## Methodological Limitations

This evaluation has several methodological limitations that should be kept in mind when reviewing the findings.

**Observed Recidivism Data.** Record keeping by CoSA sites does not capture what happens to a core member when, for whatever reason, he leaves CoSA. Therefore time-at-risk could only be defined as the time in which core members were simultaneously involved in a CoSA and living in the community (i.e. it excludes the time core members were either not involved in a CoSA, or not living in the community). CoSA record keeping does not track what happens with a core member outside his time in CoSA. Official records, such as CPIC or OMS data, were not consulted within the scope of this evaluation due to lag time

member's release date, the start and end date of each circle, and the time that a core member was absent from their circle (i.e., date of arrest, and length of time incarcerated). However, due to insufficient record keeping (either pre-project or during), this information was not always available. In cases where an accurate time-at-risk could not be calculated, the case was deleted (n=22). See Table 2.

**Cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis.** This analysis derives from the rates of recidivism found using the above observed recidivism data. The same limitation applies here: only recidivistic events occurring while the core member was in CoSA have been counted.

Table 2: Number of deleted cases by site.

Site	Number of cases deleted
CSRQ	7
Peterborough	7
Vancouver/Fraser Valley	1
South Western Ontario	5
South Saskatchewan	2
Total	22

constraints. This analysis therefore sheds light on only a portion of each core member's reoffense history post-release. A secondary limitation is that these data are self-reported. First the core member, or at some sites a parole officer, must report a breach or reoffense to the site, and then the site would have to report it during the data collection process of this evaluation.

Furthermore, the quality of these data is entirely dependent on the quality of record keeping at each site, which varied considerably. For this analysis, it was essential to know each core

Variance in definitions across project sites. Given that the demonstration project has been implemented in 13 sites across the country, one would expect differences in implementation and in operationalization. However, in terms of "accounting", when definitions of circles vary, it becomes a challenge to capture with any degree of accuracy the number of circles that are open and/or closed. All such calculations must therefore be understood as approximate.

# Findings

The findings reported in this section reflect those derived from a synthesis, analysis and triangulation of each of the lines of evidence as they pertain to each evaluation question. Where warranted, extant literature such as peer reviewed articles and previous evaluation studies has been used to provide additional depth and nuance to our analysis.

## Process Questions

Process questions are designed to test the validity of the program theory, unravel what is happening in CoSA, focus on the details of the program, and participant experiences, and gain insight into any major patterns and implementation issues within and between program sites.

***P-1: What is the program theory underlying CoSA? How do activities, outputs and outcomes interrelate? Is the program theory consistent across program sites (program fidelity)? What are notable differences across sites (e.g., balance between accountability and support?)***

Lines of Evidence	
Program documentation	√
Interviews with site staff	√
Interviews with circle volunteers	√
Interviews with core members	√
Interviews with regional chaplains	√
Case studies	√

Indicators
Common themes across program sites
Common themes among program stakeholders
Linkages identified between activities, outputs and outcomes
Duration, frequency of each phase/activities

Developing a program's theory—making the underlying assumptions about what causes the intended or observed program outcomes explicit beyond the linear descriptors contained in a logic model—is considered essential to understanding implementation issues and what intermediate outcomes need to be achieved for the program to work as intended (Funnell & Rogers, 2011). A further advantage in articulating CoSA's program theory is that it provides a more coherent framework for interpreting findings and reporting results. What follows is a re-conceptualization of CoSA's program theory based on analysis from the evaluation, current literature on CoSA, and theoretical frameworks derived from sociological and psychological literature.

CoSA is premised on the theory that the assistance, support, and accountability offered in the context of friendship to core members by CoSA volunteers will lead to their successful integration within the community (McWhinnie, Wilson & Brown, 2013; Wilson & McWhinnie, 2013). During the planning stages of this evaluation, the understanding of CoSA's program theory was premised on a fairly structured three-phase model based on three key underlying principles: support, monitoring and maintenance (Saunders & Wilson, 2002; Wilson, McWhinnie & Wilson, 2008). The end of the maintenance phase was understood to mark the official end of the circle, with integration of the core member into a community as the final goal. As such, the original logic model (see Appendix C) depicted a fairly structured program theory that was based on a linear understanding of core member progression through the CoSA program. While the progression was conceptualized as quite fluid, depending upon the individual needs of the core member and the circle dynamics, there was nonetheless a clearly demarcated beginning, middle and end to the circle.

Although our findings indicate that the average time for a core member to spend in CoSA is three years (36 months), the multiple lines of evidence and analysis attenuated a program theory that varies according to the dynamics of the individual circle, based on the history of the core member and background of the circle volunteers. Bates et al., (2011) also found that circles can last anywhere between 2-24 months, with 18% lasting longer than two years. As such, it becomes difficult to articulate a three-phased progression through the program. According to Wilson et al., (2008):

Although it was originally expected that a CoSA would run for about two years, whereupon the core member would be functional enough to get on with his own life, we have learned that most core members are such incredibly damaged and socially ostracized people that the circle becomes a virtual replacement for the family and friendly supports that they effectively lost as a consequence of their offending behaviour (p. 29).

they do seem to become less formal in terms of meetings and covenanting processes, and move into less frequent and formal meetings.

Our findings suggest that what remains fairly consistent across all project sites is that circle activities generally involve weekly meetings to discuss challenges, risk factors, and triggers, all of which helps to create a foundation for a relationship between core members and circle volunteers that is based on trust, support, accountability, care and respect. This relationship, fundamental to the success of CoSA, helps address criminogenic factors by providing practical assistance, reducing social isolation and feelings of loneliness, and by fostering the development of prosocial behaviours, all of which are key outcome measures.

The relationship between the core member and circle volunteers is essential to the success of CoSA (McWhinnie, Wilson & Brown, 2013; Wilson & McWhinnie, 2013; Weaver, 2013), as the support provided to core members stands outside of, or apart from, the formal, professionally-based support system. Given the many responses provided by

*Table 3. Reasons for circle closure*

<b>Reason for closure</b>	<b>Pre-Project</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Year 5</b>
Incarceration	1	1	1	7	11	8
Moved away	0	3	1	2	3	5
Lack of cooperation	0	0	4	3	1	2
Drop out	1	1	3	3	12	1
Died	0	0	0	1	1	1
Graduated	5	1	3	3	4	5
Other	0	0	0	1	3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>26</b>

We also note that circles close for a number of different reasons, such as reincarceration, moving away, lack of cooperation, drop out, death, including successful integration (“graduation”) with a community (employment, pro-social and intimate relationships, safe accommodation and apparent self-sufficiency) (see Table 2). Overall, however, our findings would suggest that in some sites, circles never officially close, per se, though

core members throughout this evaluation, CoSA is successful precisely because it is seen as outside the criminal justice /mental health system. Trust, a key component of any healthy relationship, grows and develops between a core member and the circle volunteers in large part because of the volunteer and community-based nature of the CoSA model. One of the goals of CoSA is that the relationships will eventually develop as friendships. As Wilson

et al., (2008) explain, “it is how that relationship is constructed that spells the difference between a community-based, informal network of control supported by local professionals, and a professionally-based, formal network of control supported by citizen volunteers” (p. 29).

This brings us to a defining aspect of the CoSA model—the fundamentally social understanding of the nature of reoffending (Bazemore & Stinchcomb, 2004; Andrews & Bonta, 2007), and its concomitant link to the reduction of one of the most significant risk factors for sex offenders, the lack of supportive networks (Willis & Grace, 2009). Our findings indicate that it is the relationship that is formed between circle volunteers and core members, including the role-modeling of prosocial behaviour and the reduction in social isolation and alienation, that leads to what we have identified as micro-level criminogenic outcomes: basic needs—food, clothing, shelter and safety—of core members are met; substance abuse issues are addressed, and core members learn to live within their release conditions; core members learn to communicate with greater openness and honesty; core members develop deepening levels of trust with circle volunteers; core members report feeling less socially isolated; core members become gainfully employed, and whether or not they are able to become employed, they also participate in volunteers’ activities, and in other positive leisure pursuits (Andrews & Bonta, 2007). CoSA circles provide core members with essential supportive relationships and supportive communities, as well as a sense of connection and

a level of social integration that we understand as essential to core members’ (and CoSA’s) success (Andrews & Bonta, 2007; Willis & Grace, 2009; Ward & Brown, 2004; Ward & Stewart, 2004).

To help us understand the circle dynamics and outcomes, we first turn to Emile Durkhiem, an early sociologist who studied the link between society and health, focusing more specifically on how social integration influences mortality in his renowned book *Suicide* (1897). For Durkheim, the act of interacting and connecting with one another, including the benefits that accrue as a result of these relationships and interactions, creates a sense of social connection and social bond that is essential for an individual’s mental and physical health. Berkman & Glass (2000) further posit that social support in the form of human relationships and the level of interconnectedness and embeddedness in a community is essential to an individual’s health and wellbeing.

Social network theory focuses specifically on these relationships and their connections between the type and level of support within these networks and positive mental and physical health outcomes. The focus here is at the social level rather than at the psychological level, with specific attention given to the creation of social ties and social integration (Berkman & Glass, 2000). These social networks, defined by Glass, Brissette and Seeman (2000) as “the web of social relationships that surround an individual” (p. 847), are importantly influenced by macro social-structural conditions that directly impact

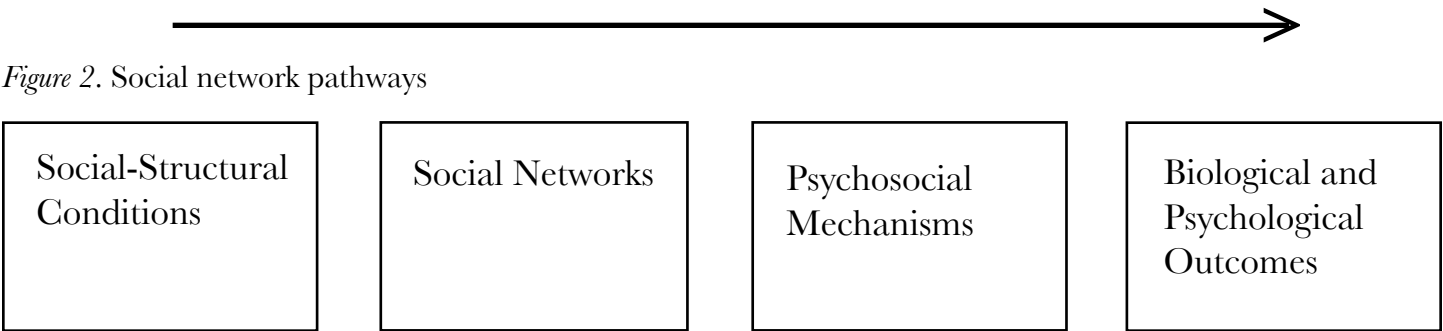


Figure 2. Social network pathways

the structure and characteristics of the social network. Figure 2, adapted from Berkman et al. (2000) represents the domains of social networks that we conceptualize as representing CoSA circle dynamics/CoSA community dynamics and core member outcomes.

***Social-structural conditions*** would include all of those macro-level cultural, historical, social and political factors that influence core members and their level of participation in CoSA. We would identify such factors as past familial/social history and relationships, level of education and schooling, length of incarceration, nature of offence and offending history, past employment, cultural and community influences.

For instance, Andrews & Bonta, (2007, p.166) define the immediate social-structural and cultural factors that influence individual behavior patterns. They include family of origin and membership composition (e.g. personality, ability, values, mental health, and criminal conduct history), crime, substance abuse conditions, educational and occupational influences, as well as parenting patterns, skills and resources. To these social structural influences, they add neighborhood membership composition, such as the proportion of individuals active in criminal behavior against those active in prosocial pursuits, and individual roles and status. These, though psychologically oriented, are addressed within a social-psychological context, where the personal, interpersonal and community influences on multiple classes of relevant variables are addressed. For a succinct description, see Andrews & Bonta's Table 4.3, "The Broad Context: Political, Economic, Cultural, Social-Structural" variables influencing human behaviour (Andrews & Bonta, 2007, p. 166, Table).

***Social network*** characteristics, where we would locate the circle and other CoSA community-building activities, likewise would include structural aspects, such as the number of members, connections among members, similarity

among members and nature of connectivity. Characteristics might include the frequency of contacts, the number and types of interactions and level of support, the depth of connection and history, and reciprocity of exchanges and transactions (Andrews & Bonta, 2007, p.166). Offending behavior and risk is individually expressed and recognized as being linked to personal factors within the individual (intrapersonally), between individuals (interpersonally), and within immediate situational connections in multiple settings such as family, school, work and leisure activities (Wilson & McWhinnie, 2014, p.16-16).

***The psychosocial domain***, which we understand as circle dynamics, includes levels of social support, social influence, social engagement, person-to-person contact and access to material resources. It is here that we would locate the notion of 'social capital', as it captures well the complexity of relational dynamics that are at play between a core member and circle volunteers. For our purposes, social capital in the context of CoSA refers to the development of a network of connections or relationships whose reproduction leads to continuing sociability and continuous exchange (Bourdieu, 1986). The improvement of social capital for the core member, in large part through role modeling of prosocial relationships within the circle (Wilson & McWhinnie, 2014), leads to new opportunities for ongoing positive relationships, which serve to enhance prospects for safe housing, employment, and other goods necessary for a "good life" (Ward & Stewart, 2003). Ultimately these same relationships lead to levels of societal and community integration to varying degrees, obviously depending on the individual (i.e. respecting the "Principle of Responsivity," Andrews & Bonta, 2007, p. 262). In fact, strengthening social capital for the core member is the most prominent theoretical effect of participation in CoSA (Saunders & Wilson, 2002; Wilson, Huculak & McWhinnie, 2002). Research also indicates that the level of "connectedness" is inversely linked to risk-related behaviours, where an increase in social disconnection decreases the

likelihood of positive outcomes (Berkman et al., 2000; see also Andrews & Bonta, 2007, p. 163; Ross & Fabiano, 1985).

***Biological and psychological outcomes*** would include changes in mental, physical and psychological health and observed behaviours, or what we understand as core member outcomes.

In an important sense, CoSA is itself a working example of social network theory as presented above. We can make clear connections between the initial influencing variables (where the core member comes from, who s/he is), the structure and characteristics that define the circle, and the circle dynamics or psychosocial mechanisms that are fundamentally connected to the successful attainment of outcomes. Although it is beyond the scope of this evaluation to delve too deeply in social exchange theory, its potential applicability to the CoSA model is undeniable and warrants further exploration. We now turn to a discussion of two other models that play a major role in our understanding of CoSA.

In discussing CoSA's underlying program theory, it has been noted that CoSA's model (its essential circle structure and circle dynamics) while perhaps largely unintentional in the early days, mirrors the psychology of criminal conduct (PCC) developed by Andrews and Bonta (2007), and the "Good Lives Model" (GLM) (Ward & Brown, 2004; Ward & Stewart, 2003).

Within a psychology of criminal conduct, three principles are articulated: the principle of risk, the principle of need, and the principle of responsivity, or, "RNR.". The principle of risk holds that interventions target individuals who are the most (i.e. "highest") risk to offend or reoffend according to empirically validated measures (e.g. Stable 2007). The principle of need holds that these interventions should further target within these high-risk individuals those empirically identified needs most closely related to criminal behavior (e.g. dynamic "criminogenic" needs, such as antisocial attitudes, antisocial associates

[relationships], criminal history [which is static], personality patterns, problematic social-structural issues in family, home and intimate relationships [relationships], or problems at work [relationships], use of leisure [relationships], and substance abuse). The principle of responsivity "requires treatment providers to consider participant characteristics and idiosyncrasies in designing treatment plans and implementing interventions. Issues of cognitive ability, motivation, maturity, and the individual's personal and inter-personal circumstances are among the domains in need of consideration (Wilson & Yates, 2009, p.158)."

These factors are individually expressed and recognized as being linked to states within the individual (intra-personal), between individuals (interpersonal), and within immediate situations in multiple settings such as family, school, work, and leisure activities. The aim is to reduce the probability of criminal behavior and enhance the probability of prosocial behavior such as the development of trust and friendship—social capital, in other words—by meeting the individual core member's individually expressed, criminogenic needs (Andrews & Bonta, 2007; Wilson & McWhinnie, 2014; Wilson, McWhinnie & Cortoni, 2009).

Wilson and Yates (20019) define the Good Lives Model (GLM) this way:

The GLM is known as a strength-based approach that focuses on developing the resources required to live a life that is socially acceptable and personally meaningful (Ward, Yates & Willis, 2012) and that promotes the development of lifestyle balance and self-determinism (Curtiss & Warren, 1973), all in the quest for a "good life" (Ward, 2002; Ward & Stewart, 2003; Wilson & Yates, 2009). CoSA's focus on the positive involvement in circle activities, fostering positive relationships among core members and circle volunteers, and building prosocial support throughout the CoSA

process shifts the emphasis to building social capital among core members.

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There is much debate in the field about whether PCC and GLM can be integrated into one theoretical model (Andrews, Bonta & Wormith, 2011; Ward et al., 2012), and as to whether CoSA’s success and potential is linked to the focus on risk management or social support (Fox, 2013; Hanvey, Philpot & Wilson, 2011). This dichotomization of the “debate,” misses the complementary nature of PCC and GLM, and dismisses at once the strengths each theoretical approach brings to the table. Far from “either/or,” Wilson & Yates (2009), observe that,

In short, [the GLM] approach utilizes the RNR model, but enhances intervention to focus on the individual as a whole person and aims to assist the offender to attain that degree of psychological well-being expected to assist in risk reduction. This approach also allows treatment to more effectively address responsivity and to better incorporate effective clinical strategies in intervention. (p.160).

The classic error is to occupy a reductionist perspective and mistake an entire general personality and social psychology of criminal

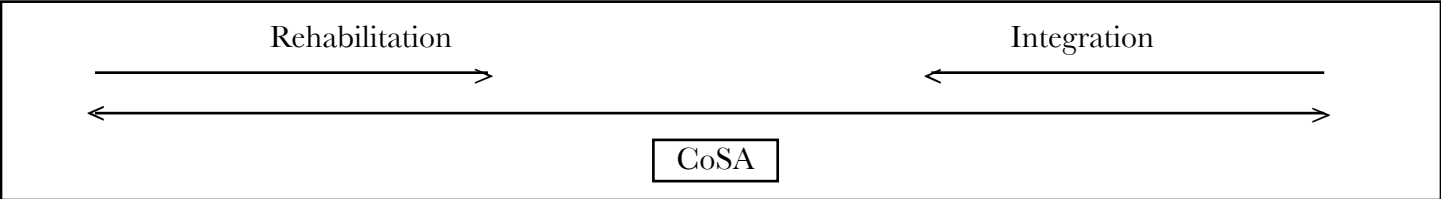
behavior (e.g., PCC) as something that simply arrives at three elements: risk, need and responsivity, and to then further reduce an entire body of work in the science of psychology by suggesting it is concerned with just one of those three elements—risk—and in so doing, dismiss it as too narrow a focus. This constitutes, in another classical sense, an act of “knowledge destruction” (Andrews & Wormith, 2006).

Again, as Wilson and Yates (2009) conclude:

The literature regarding the RNR model clearly demonstrates its utility and effectiveness in reducing risk. . . . We are always compelled to look for ways to maximize reductions in re-offending. It would seem that an integration of RNR and the GLM might assist us in achieving those additional reductions in recidivism by focusing on problem areas and offering interventions commensurate with risk and need, while ensuring consumer buy-in and attending to the overall well-being and pro-social functioning of offenders (p.160).

This evaluation would suggest that CoSA has embodied such an integration, both with respect to honoring the principles of risk (it works with high-risk sexual offenders), need (it has begun to regularly assess criminogenic needs with the Stable 2007), and responsivity, in that it deals differentially with core members who are often very damaged and disturbed individuals who may never achieve “integration” as most of society might perceive it, and by considering the whole person, their individualistic “strengths and goals so that they can ultimately achieve well-being and the sort of balanced, self-determined

Figure 3. Model depicting two theoretical components along a continuum



lifestyle” (Wilson & Yates, 2009).

It is important to note that both a PCC and a GLM point to complementary key aspects that can be understood along a continuum (see Figure 3), from rehabilitation to integration.

One of the key long term outcomes of CoSA (as originally articulated) was its ability to help core members achieve integration with a community. Our findings, however, would indicate that the concept of “integration” must be understood along a continuum (see above) that is based on the needs and capabilities of the individual core member (responsivity), which are dependent upon a combination of factors such as the core member’s history interacting with the dynamics and effects of participation in a circle. As Woolford (2009) points out, it is important to note that many core members were never integrated in the first place. This leads to some key questions about CoSA: How is success for a core member defined?

<b>Lines of Evidence</b>	
Program documentation	√
Site profile	√
Interviews with site staff	√
Interviews with core members	√
Interviews with regional chaplains	√
CM recidivism data	√
Case studies	√

<b>Indicators</b>
Total # of dropouts
Total # of CM referred/screened/year
# CM actively participating in each site/year
Type of CM recruited
Approaches to recruitment and screening across sites

Moreover, and as an important corollary, what do we understand by the term “integration”?

***P-2-To what extent did the project reach its target population (CM)? Why or why not? What changes must be made to reach intended audience more effectively?***

*Recruitment practices.* To identify and recruit core

members, CoSA sites have worked actively at building relationships with federal, provincial and local institutions, and with core members while they are still incarcerated. Findings indicate that half of core members are contacted before their release, with sites working with core members for approximately 10.7 months prior to their release dates. The majority of core members are recruited through relationships built with prison personnel and Chaplains, through halfway house contacts, and with parole and probation officers.

Further, beginning in 2012, a “protocol” was established with CSC whereby every CoSA site coordinator or designated staff member, after relevant security procedures were satisfied, received training from CSC on their digitally-based Offender Management System (OMS). The site coordinator (or staff member designate) was then issued a CSC e-mail account which they use to securely access offender file data at a local parole office or institution. A Senior Project Officer with CSC Chaplaincy was also trained so that she could take steps to “assign” cases to CoSA through OMS. The cases that are “assigned,” are all sexual offenders (100%) who are within one year of their warrant expiry date (WED), regardless of their risk designation, or whether or not they will go on to serve a long term supervision order (LTSO) imposed by the court. A list is sent every month of new cases reaching their one year mark before WED. This allows CoSA sites to make contact with offenders up to 12 months prior to their release to begin the eligibility screening and preparatory work required to include or exclude the offender in CoSA as a core member.

*Recruitment criteria.* The majority of sites accept core members with a combination of WED, 810, LTSO, and statutory releases, high risk to reoffend, little to no support in the community, and a willingness to participate.

For the purposes of the CoSA Demonstration Project, the following target groups have been identified:



- Federally-sentenced sexual offenders who have been detained at their Statutory Release Date (SRD);
- released at the end of their sentences (i.e., Warrant Expiry Date, or WED);
- those offenders who continue to be supervised following the expiration of their sentence (WED) under the terms of a court-ordered Long Term Supervision Order (LTSO) (CoSA Project Description, 2009).

*Eligibility criteria.* While there is some variation across program sites, the following eligibility criteria are used to screen referrals to CoSA (CoSA Project Description, 2009):

- considered to be a sexual offender;
- present a high risk to reoffend;
- have little or no prosocial support in the community
- accept some level of responsibility for their crimes;
- prepared to covenant with their circle;
- acknowledge the need for support upon release;
- willing to abide by any court-imposed restrictions (i.e., through S. 810 CCC), or if they feel they want to dispute the imposition of all or some conditions the court may impose, promising to do so through appropriate legal channels;
- prepared to address any addictions issues by attending 12-Step meetings;
- intent on there being no more victims;

Although these “criteria” are fairly common across all program sites, they differ slightly for sites

that receive funding from multiple sources and/or are part of an umbrella organization (such as the Mennonite Central Committee or the Salvation Army). These latter sites have a broader set of criteria to accommodate requirements from other funding sources. For example, they may accept offenders incarcerated in provincial institutions or with no sexual offense history, but who are heavily institutionalized. However, these types of offenders were not included in the National Demonstration Project, nor were any interviewed as part of the case studies.

*Shift in target population.* Findings indicate a shift in the target population over the duration of the Demonstration Project, with an overall decrease in WED core members to a fairly steady increase in LTSO core members (see Table 3). The evaluation findings suggest that the increase in the LTSO population presents a particular set of challenges in terms of the support required to help core members navigate and function within the conditions of their release. One circle volunteer likened the ups and downs of having a LTSO core member violate supervision conditions for minor infractions as a “roller coaster” and like “watching a train wreck”, never knowing when the core member would violate his release conditions and be sent back to prison.

*Motivations for involvement.* The majority of core members have learned about CoSA through their Chaplains or parole officers, with one-quarter finding out about CoSA through word-of-mouth. For many core members, the transition from life in prison to life out in the community is challenging, with housing and social support identified as the

Table 4. New core members per year by release type

	<b>LTSO</b>	<b>WED</b>	<b>Total # CMs</b>
<b>Pre</b>	13 (21.3%)	48 (78.7%)	61
<b>Year 1</b>	13 (39.4%)	20 (60.6%)	33
<b>Year 2</b>	21 (56.8%)	16 (43.2%)	37
<b>Year 3</b>	28 (59.6%)	19 (40.4%)	47
<b>Year 4</b>	14 (37.8%)	23 (62.2%)	37
<b>Year 5</b>	10 (52.6%)	9 (47.4%)	19

two most critical re-entry needs (Fox, 2013). As such, core members express their motivation to get involved in CoSA as a way to ensure that they have some level of support provided to them when they get out of prison. According to one of the core members:

They were there to support me when I got out. You might be able to figure out better words than I can. You know what I mean? Because they got me housing, they helped me get clothes, they helped me adjust to society.

Lines of Evidence	
Site profile	√
Interviews with site staff	√
Case studies	√

Indicators	
Type of ongoing activities outside of circles	
Type of implementation challenges and barriers identified	
Range of project successes and challenges	
Increase in total CM, CV and community partners	

***P-3: How were project activities implemented across sites? What worked well? What challenges and barriers have emerged as the program has been implemented? How is program fidelity measured across sites (implemented as intended)?***

*Funding has enabled sites to expand operations.* Although there is somewhat more flexibility for sites that have additional funding sources, the demonstration project has enabled all sites to expand operations (increase in number of circles, CMs, CVs), build project infrastructure, build community connections and partnerships, and increase their media presence. Table 3 (above) shows the increase in the number of new core members recruited prior to and during the demonstration project.

NCPC funding has also enabled site coordinators to build strong relationships with diverse community services, thereby increasing the

diversity of representation on steering committees and boards, while building positive relationships with community partners. As one of the site coordinators observed, “Initially the police wanted to run me out on a rail, whereas now the police have a better sense of CoSA and they have learned how to work together with CoSA and have learned that it is not just about support but also about accountability.”

*Case Study Illustration: Case studies provide a further illustration that increased funding has enabled sites to expand their operations significantly, focus on developing their own training materials for circle volunteers, and develop program documentation, protocols, mission statements and data collection procedures. Given the recent decision not to renew CoSA funding following the end of the Demonstration Project, or to continue CoSA funding of any sort after March 31, 2015, all case study sites are looking to the future and wondering how they will manage.*

*To address this issue, one of the case study sites within the last year has moved to a more volunteer-centered and -empowered model of CoSA. In this model, the Circle Coordinators no longer supervise every circle meeting. Instead, volunteers have been prepared so they may take the lead and run the circle meetings. The Circle Coordinator visits each circle on a monthly basis to ensure it is operating according to site policies, that there are no safety concerns or that if there are concerns, they have been appropriately addressed, and that the circle remains effective in terms of its support and accountability functions. This site feels that volunteer empowerment is important for the survival of CoSA. At the end of 2014, when the National Demonstration Project funding terminates, there will only be funding for slightly less than one full time position which will end March 2015. Site coordinators will not resources enabling them to directly supervise each circle meeting, and will have to focus more on implementing the program. As the Project Manager points out, “CoSAs are not going to survive unless we have more volunteer empowerment. I really trust volunteer empowerment....”*

*Implementation challenges.* Evaluation findings indicate that sites experienced a number of challenges related to project implementation. Sites

in large geographic areas experienced difficulties coordinating community services for core members, administering the site, and maintaining clear communication among all stakeholders. Volunteer retention was identified as a challenge by some sites, particularly given the magnitude of the time and emotional commitment involved for circle volunteers. Retention was also an issue for a because of the lack of circles available for trained volunteers. Other sites noted challenges with meeting the agreed-upon Demonstration Project core member eligibility requirements, which they themselves drafted initially, and identifying motivated core members. Others had problems with designing and adapting training materials specific to the diversity of volunteer information needs. Some sites noted challenges in working with LTSO core members and potential negative effects on circle morale if they breached. All sites noted the different re-entry needs and associated challenges with LTSO and WED core members.

Program fidelity. We note a similarity across CoSA sites in terms of their broad operational activities (day-to-day running of CoSA) and strategic activities (building community connections, identifying resources, etc.). However, we also note that although all sites essentially follow the same CoSA model, there are local differences identified in terms of community needs and funding sources, with slight variations in program philosophy and program history.

*Case Study Illustration: Through case studies we note that sites differ in terms of their emphasis on CoSA values and philosophies, with some sites valuing full disclosure while other sites do not. We also note that the definition of a circle varies across project sites, a fact that needs to be taken into account when counting the overall number of circles per site. Some sites also have a broader range of core members, as other funding sources mean that they are not constrained to select core members within the initial parameters.*

*One site holds bi-monthly meetings, providing core members and circle volunteers with the opportunity to get together, cook a meal and share in an evening of songs, stories and*

*socializing. Core members who are waiting for a circle are also welcome to attend this event. Another site values the balance between support and accountability. This is accomplished by showing volunteers how to ask tough questions and how to challenge the core member in order to ensure the circle is equally balanced between accountability and support. Furthermore, volunteers are trained to maintain boundaries to ensure they are not helping the core member beyond what is expected of them as a volunteer, thereby possibly putting themselves at risk. Another site places greater emphasis on providing support and accountability on a friendship basis*

Lines of Evidence	
Site profile	√
Interviews with site staff	√
Case studies	√

Indicators
Level of satisfaction
Range of challenges identified
Level and quality of support provided
Connections made between CoSA and community
Perception of community support
Clarity of policy frameworks

*within a circle. The primary dynamic within the circle is one of friendship and acceptance.*

***P-4: How effective are CoSA’s local governance structures (e.g., Advisory Panel, Steering Committee, Board of Directors) in supporting program planning and reporting?***

*Extensive development of site governance structures.* The governance structure of CoSA distinguishes it as a unique community and volunteer-based strategy designed to address the various integration challenges a sex offender may face. Overall, the Demonstration Project has enabled the extensive development and expansion of governance structures for managing all CoSA sites. For example, a large number of sites have created local steering committees that are comprised of community members responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations and administration of CoSA. They screen and approve core members, identify training needs, connect to service

providers, and essentially act as a liaison between community organizations and CoSA. A number of sites have also established boards of directors who are responsible for more strategic governance issues, such as overall direction, oversight, and public consultation. Other sites maintain advisory committees composed of community members who provide advice, but who have no responsibility for the oversight of CoSA.

We note that despite often extensive governance structures, site coordinators nonetheless remain central to overall site management and day-to-day activities, with many playing an intermediary role between the day-to-day functioning of the site and overall site governance. For example, site coordinators continue to play a key role in providing ongoing advice and support to circle volunteers, circles (e.g. helping to navigate required services and support), training, and outreach to communities.

*Differences in governance models.* Case studies illustrate that there are significant differences between these umbrella sites (such as the Mennonite Central Committee) and smaller more autonomous sites in terms of their operations, logistics and philosophies. We also note that such sites have access to more resources, greater involvement in joint initiatives, and access to a wider range of community support.

*Case Study Illustration:* At one site, the Board of Directors’ role is to act as the public “face” of CoSA, while the Steering Committee is comprised of members from community organizations that support the work of CoSA. The Steering Committee was established by the Board of Directors to address operational issues related to circles. Steering Committee representatives bring their own expertise and professional knowledge to advise the Board and support the site.

With another site, it was decided the site would continue to

*be operated jointly by both M2/W2 and Catholic Charities Justice Services (CCJS) at the start of the Demonstration Project. A formal advisory committee was created to provide operational oversight and consultation for the demonstration project. Although this committee does not have decision-making power, it impacts decisions made on policy issues, volunteer issues, and core member issues.*

Our overall finding in terms of site governance models would suggest that a diversity of community partners on the steering committee/advisory panel works well to gain support and access to community services. For many, membership on these committees is strategic. Furthermore, while these governance structures provide overall direction, many site coordinators still maintain day-to-day control of site operations, a strategy they consider effective.

Lines of Evidence	
Program documentation	√
Interviews with site staff	√
Literature	√
Case studies	√

Indicators
Level of satisfaction
# current volunteer hours and materials used (see P-7)
# training hours and materials (see P-8)
# CoSA staff
# of recidivistic events prevented compared to cost of CoSA
# of recidivistic events prevented in terms of savings to society

***P-5: What resources are available for CoSA initiatives? Are resources adequate to sustain current project commitments? To further expand participation in CoSA (volunteers and core members)? What is the cost effectiveness and cost benefit of the program?***

*Demonstration project funding.* The NCPC contribution

7 Mennonite Central Committee (MCC, MCCA, MCCM, MCCS), United Church (UC), Mennonite Church Saskatchewan (MCS), Provincial Special Needs Program (PSNP), Aumônerie Communautaire de Montréal (ACM), Communautés Organisms (CO), Ontario Trillium Fund (OT Catholic Charities Justice Services/Man-to-Man Visitation Program (CCJS/M2F), Rhodes College, Anglican Diocese, Community Constituents, The Church of St. John the Evangelist (St. John's), Community Chaplaincy

agreement provided a budget for CoSA of approximately \$7.4 million to be used from October 1, 2009 to September 30, 2014 by the 13 sites participating in the national demonstration project. This money is further supplemented by \$4,192,742.45, which represents existing funding from CSC and non-government funding sources<sup>7</sup>. *Case Study Illustration: Case Studies show that sites started out small, with typically one person running a site with little program infrastructure, data collection, or program documentation. With the advent of NCPC funding, all participating sites were able to expand by hiring more staff, better documenting their program, building program infrastructure, and developing networks. Unfortunately, it was never the plan to re-fund CoSA through NCPC, so sites are now looking for other funding sources to sustain their project, or to scale their program back to its original size, or to close it altogether.*

The current funding arrangements include contributions from the CSC of approximately \$700,000 annually, of which fully half goes to one site, and the other half is shared by 15 other sites nationally, and contributions from private sources outside government. This funding arrangement, apart from the National Demonstration Funding which is not meant to fulfill core funding needs, is inadequate to support current operational requirements of CoSA, let alone to expand operations either to other communities or to other types of core members.

*As one of the coordinators notes:*

*It is a very different program when it is just one person running the program. My experience was trying to build a program and learning about it myself. Just being on my own was very different, I did not have stats, I did some things [reporting] for the Regional Chaplains, but, I mean, I kept no records of core members or their files...I was running by the seat of my pants really, it was a really good program, and I think we did really well, but it wasn't well documented.*

*Another site has evolved from volunteer-driven informal circles, to a fully-fledged CoSA site. In the early stages of its*

*work this site was composed of church members in informal support groups, whereas currently the site is comprised of a Board of Directors, a Steering Committee and a number of CoSAs.*

Lines of Evidence	
Site profile	√
Interviews with site staff	√
Interviews with circle volunteers	√
Survey-circle volunteers	√
Survey-service providers	√
Case studies	√

Indicators
# and type of community services identified and contacted
# and type of community service connections made
Satisfaction with connections made
# outreach/network activities

For cost-effectiveness analysis and cost-benefit analysis, see page 45.

***P-6: How have connections with community services been initiated? How have these connections supported the work of CoSA sites?***

*Ongoing contact with community services.* CoSA sites use a two-pronged approach to initiate and maintain contacts with community services. On the one hand, sites ensure that steering committees are representative of the community as a way to ensure on-going contact with relevant service providers. Site coordinators also actively engage and network with the community and with community service providers on an ongoing basis. The majority of site staff describe their relationship with community service providers as a partnership, and as one of the site coordinators observed, “CoSA can’t work well in isolation.”

Partnerships with community service providers (e.g., Fraser Health Winnipeg Mental Health Services, local police services and the RCMP, public charities, Salvation Army, etc.) are considered essential to the work of CoSA, and

as a result, sites spend a considerable amount of time building and maintaining these relationships. For example, figures from the indicator report (June 2014) show that in year five CoSA sites have had 51,209 contacts with community service providers, up 20,959 from year two. Contacts with these community service providers typically have more impact on site functioning (e.g. providing training, identifying meeting locations, volunteer recruitment and awareness-raising) rather than the provision of direct support to core members. Support to core members is more likely to come from the volunteer's personal support network (e.g., housing, job and volunteer opportunities).

*Case Study Illustration: One CoSA site has impacted the parole and probation offices in the municipalities of their core members. Initially, the geographic spread of the site made creating and maintaining these relationships across the nine municipalities difficult, especially since staff positions are constantly rotating. Over time however, the site has developed and worked at many of the connections. According to the Project Manager:*

*I feel like this just gets better and better...I think we have a very good name within corrections and within probation... We are known everywhere... The director for Correctional Services is saying 'we need to be of even more help to you'.*

*Relationship between circle volunteers and community service providers.* As noted, contact with community service providers for the most part is initiated and maintained by site coordinators. Circle volunteers, for their part, have very little direct interaction with community service providers. While the majority of circle volunteers surveyed are fine with this, roughly half (48%) are "satisfied" to "very satisfied" with their current interactions with service providers; they indicated to us they would like more contact if it would help them better assist their core members, particularly in the areas of housing, health and employment. Some (14%) also indicated that they would like to see more collaboration with police and parole officers to ensure that all are working towards

the same goal. It is important to recognize that circle volunteers nonetheless play an intermediary role in the relationship between core members and community service providers. For example, circle volunteers often help core members try to understand the perspective of the community service provider (e.g. parole officer, psychologist) and help them identify housing, employment or volunteer activities.

*Role of community service providers.* While community service providers play an essential role in the success of CoSA, much of the work of CoSA occurs in a circle, and as a result the effect of the community service provider is found to be more indirect. In terms of support, community service providers help sites with recruitment of circle volunteers, core members, Steering Committee membership, and community partners, and with the provision of training and education, funding and governance. Despite all of their support and an overwhelmingly positive impression of their relationship with CoSA, one-quarter of community service providers surveyed would

Lines of Evidence	
Site profile	√
Program documentation	√
Interviews with site staff	√
Interviews with circle volunteers	√
Survey-circle volunteers	√
Case studies	√

Indicators
# and type of strategies used
# of new CVs identified and recruited relative to the # of new CMs
Volunteer satisfaction
# and type of challenges identified
# and type of retention strategies

nonetheless like to initiate better communication and more connections with CoSA, particularly concerning new core members.

***P-7: What strategies are used to recruit and***

***retain circle volunteers? What worked well? What challenges/barriers were identified?***

*Mix of formal and informal recruitment strategies.* Recruitment strategies are considered a key part of all outreach activities. Sites use a combination of formal recruitment strategies at job fairs, and universities, for example, and informal strategies such as community- and faith-based connections, or word of mouth. As the survey of circle volunteers indicates, the most successful recruitment strategies are through a CoSA staff member (32%), through word of mouth (27%), attending presentations (9%), university courses (8%), the internet (5%), church (5%), and advertisements (4%).

*Case Study Illustration: Case studies illustrate that whereas some sites rely on faith-based organizations for the recruitment of volunteers, others are less tied to the church. For example, in one of the Montreal sites, only 20% of volunteers have a Christian background. For some, recruitment of circle volunteers occurs primarily through word of mouth, though partnering with community agencies and through holding community events. According to the site coordinator, this process helps them focus on slowly building a relationship with potential partners, ultimately helping them identify a committed group of volunteers over time. Another site relies primarily through partnerships with faith-based organizations and through contacts made by the site coordinator.*

*Motivation for involvement.* CoSA's high retention rate for volunteers reflects the circle volunteers' commitment to their core member and to the principles of CoSA. Forty-seven percent of survey respondents volunteer with CoSA as a way to make a contribution to the community. Secondary reasons given include fulfilling religious obligations/beliefs (17%), gaining experience in the field of restorative justice (16%), and knowing someone who has been affected by an offender (11%).

The majority of circle volunteers came to CoSA through indirect recruitment efforts such as word of mouth and the Internet. This supports a key finding from interviews with circle volunteers:

many indicate that they are looking for a more challenging and meaningful volunteer opportunity, describing a very selective and intentional decision about volunteering with CoSA. The reasons cited for involvement reflect those found among volunteers in other studies (Hannem, 2011; Weaver, 2013), primarily, their belief that CoSA creates safer communities, that restorative justice and the principles behind CoSA are an extension of their religious faith, a fulfillment of their search for more challenging volunteer experiences, and fulfillment of a formal educational program goal. As one of the circle volunteers observed:

I have two kids that I love a lot, obviously—and I would never want anything bad to happen to them so I thought this is a way of kind of being—it's like a civic duty, you know? It's like, I want to help protect other kids, obviously. So that's kind of where I was coming from.

Another circle volunteer was motivated by her faith.

I am a Catholic and this work called to me. This is something that I wanted to do. It is important to find the good in people because then they can change.

For another volunteer, the motivation for involvement was based on her sense of social justice. According to this circle volunteer:

It's a way for me to feel that in some way I am helping. That I'm really helping to make the community a safer place to live. As Gandhi said, "be the change that you want to see," and I think about that, and I think about the fact that I can sit in my living room and think about how things should be but you really have to take action on it.

*Development of mutually beneficial relationships.* In keeping with the program theory outlined above that places emphasis on the development of pro-social relationships, we have observed in terms of

recruitment that circle volunteers are motivated to get involved in CoSA in large part by their social principles and belief in restorative justice. In terms of retention, circle volunteers describe fulfilling relationships that over time, develop characteristics of reciprocity (Weaver, 2013) and a level of emotional investment and depth of caring (Weaver, 2013). According to one of the circle volunteers:

On a more personal level, I think our lives—my life, and the people who are part of the circles of support as volunteers—have been enriched immensely by a relationship with people who, most all of us are middle class, highly educated types, we wouldn’t have that kind of experience. So it enriches our lives as much as it enriches others.

As another circle volunteer described:

Sometimes we think we’re only doing it for somebody else and yet it’s really also for me too...to see how they struggle when they come out—a lot of our guys are doing really well and yet to see what they struggle with—it’s like watching them and how they look at the possibilities really, and that’s really just inspiring for me.

This particular gentleman is 48 years old. He is illiterate, has a speech defect, and has probably [been] treated very, very badly not only at home but in schools and wherever. So he —but he’s great at fixing things. So he fixes bikes and he helps me—he just cut my lawn yesterday. He’s helped me with helping move people, and when I volunteered in a thrift store he was very helpful...he always wants to help where he can. So I give him jobs to do that I know he can do. He’s been out for nine years. Considered to be a monster in his home community. It’s so funny, this monster turned out to be just an ordinary, gentle person who has learning

disabilities and can’t speak properly, basically a marginalized person.

*Recruitment challenges.* The proportion of circle volunteers to core members is consistent over time. The average number of volunteers (3-5) per core member is reflective of the literature on the number of circle volunteers required for an effective circle (Bates et al. (2012); Wilson et al. (2007). Despite this finding, volunteer recruitment is nonetheless highlighted as an ongoing challenge across a number of project sites. Sites experiencing volunteer recruitment challenges occasionally have a waiting list of core members; however, this is not in any way a constant situation as the ratio

Lines of Evidence	
Site profile	√
Interviews with site staff	√
Interviews with circle volunteers	√
Interviews with regional chaplains	√
Survey-circle volunteers	√

Indicators
Level of satisfaction with training
# of training hours delivered to CV prior to joining a circle and after entering a circle
Training topics covered across all sites

of available volunteers to core members changes on a regular basis. Overall, the most successful strategy for recruitment includes a mix of both formal and informal approaches, and is very much based on site context.

***P-8: To what extent was volunteer training adequate for the intervention?***

*Formal and informal approaches to training.* Although all sites provide training to volunteers, the specific approach taken varies across sites, a fact that reflects each site’s history, geography and circle volunteer demographics. Some sites provide an initial eight hours of training, whereas others provide over 16 to 20 hours. For some, this training is offered in a formal group setting, but for others it is offered informally, for example, one-on-one



over coffee. There are essentially two types of training offered: formal training that consists of basic and ongoing training, and informal training, which consists of on-the-job training.

Depending upon the site, basic training can run anywhere from eight to 16 hours, with modules that can include introduction to circles, offending/unhealthy behavior cycles, integration training, victim/survivor empathy and awareness training, boundary training, CoSA fundamentals, restorative justice and faith orientation, overview of the criminal justice system, understanding sexuality and sexual deviation, offender and community perspectives, legal controls for sex offenders, and re-integration.

Ongoing training is provided to volunteers as a way to address individual training needs, keep volunteers up-to-date, and provide outside expertise on relevant issues. Some sites also hold monthly discussion series where invited speakers share their expertise on a variety of topics.

Although site staff and circle volunteers note the importance of providing formal training to volunteers, the majority believe that the most important training is of an informal nature, occurring on-the-job, and facilitated by the participation of site staff in a circle and among circle volunteers, with a mix of new and more experienced volunteers. As one of the site coordinators observed, “The composition of the circle where more experienced are paired with less experienced volunteers, really provides new recruits with the confidence and learning that they need to be active circle volunteers.”. Thus, while there is little consistency in terms of training across sites, this is likely reflective of site specific operations and circle volunteer demographics more than insufficient or inadequate training.

*Case Study Illustration: One of the challenges in training is teaching the circle volunteers how to ask tough and challenging questions. Circle volunteers report that this can*

*really only be learned on-the-job, and that when the Project Manager and/or Circle Coordinators visit the circle, they lead by example and show the circle volunteers what types of questions they should be asking, and how. One circle volunteer notes, “ [The site coordinator] comes into the circle to make sure we are in the right role and the circle is running as it should”, and “We learned to listen to [site coordinators]... learned how they ask the questions. Months later we can come up with our own questions. The training was more hands-on, which is fine because the best way to learn is to have someone show you the ropes. At first I was not comfortable using this language, but now it is better.”*

*High satisfaction with training.* Overall, training was considered excellent by the vast majority of circle volunteers. While 95% of circle volunteers surveyed were very satisfied to satisfied with the training they received prior to entering a circle, 26% nonetheless indicated that they do not have adequate experience to deal with core member issues. This points to the need to pair inexperienced volunteers with experienced volunteers in a circle for on-the-job training and to the need for ongoing training. Twenty four percent also indicated that the training they received was inadequate to help them deal with core member issues. In fact, volunteers indicated that they would like more training on how to deal with manipulative core members, what they can realistically expect from core members, more background on the lives of inmates as a better way of understanding the

Lines of Evidence	
Site profile	√
Interviews with site staff	√
Interviews with circle volunteers	√
Interviews with core members	√
Survey-circle volunteers	√
Case studies	√
Journals-circle volunteers	√

Indicators	
Types of experiences described by CMs and CVs	
Range of issues/problems identified	
Satisfaction with experience (CM and CV)	

challenges core members face when they are released, and inquiry techniques on how to hold core members accountable while still creating a positive environment. This points to the fact that ongoing training should reflect the specific needs of the volunteers to help them better address the needs of their core members.

***P-9: What do core members and circle volunteers do in circles? What is working well (successes) and not working well?***

Generally—but essentially, and in keeping with the program theory outlined above— circle volunteers and core members in a circle work together toward building trust through increasing openness and truth-telling so they can develop sound, pro-social relationships. The process of developing a sound, healthy relationship is enhanced by “situations characterized by open, warm, enthusiastic, and non-blaming communication, and by mutual respect, liking and interest” (Andrews & Bonta, 2007, 296). This is what core members and circle volunteers “do” in circles. As one can imagine, though, many core members are not familiar with building pro-social relationships, or with the processes involved. Many are institutionalized, have spent years in heavily anti-social, often violent environments where mutuality and reciprocity are foreign concepts given over to power and control tactics. Volunteers are likewise not always experienced in helping someone like their core member learn to trust and to yield to essentially prosocial processes that they might take for granted in free society. Accordingly, the work of developing healthy, prosocial relationships is not just a two-way street, it is really hard work. What follows are some glimpses into that work, or what some volunteers refer to as “a journey.”

*Evolution of a circle.* While the essential circle structure and definition is consistent across sites,

we note that the evolution of circles differs from circle to circle, as well as across sites. Overall, circles are composed of three to five circle volunteers (an average of 3, as we have pointed out earlier), with initial meetings occurring once each week, and then generally becoming less frequent over time as the core member adjusts and stressful situations become less frequent. Meetings can occur as part of a formal circle or informally over coffee, or through involvement in outside recreational activities. Most meetings start with a “check-in”, where both circle volunteers and core members share what happened during the week, followed by a more focused discussion on the core member’s issues or challenges encountered that week.

Based on recidivism data, the average time core members spend in CoSA is approximately three years (mean = 36 mos., SD = 37 mos., range = 0 – 186 mos)<sup>8</sup>. Although circles change over time as the core member becomes more accustomed to being out in society, for many the circle never comes to an end, as the friendship and support provided remain a central feature— sometimes the only feature—in a core member’s social life. As one of the circle volunteers explained, “A lot of guys, they need that ongoing support even after all the [legal] conditions are done with. Because they just don’t have a support system in their lives. So we are their family, literally.” For others, the circle remains intact but becomes less formal over time, evolving into a relationship based more on friendship than supervision.

*Case Study Illustration:* Although all case study sites demonstrate a progression or an evolution within the circle, in terms of frequency of meetings, types of issues discussed, level of support required to meet the needs of the core member, etc., one of the sites manages a fairly consistent circle evolution, with the goal being the successful closing of the circle. At this site, when a circle closes, support from

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<sup>8</sup> LTSO average time is 24.78 mos (SD = 23.83 mos., range = 0 – 142 mos).

WED and 810 average time is 42.95 mos (SD = 41.25 mos., range = 0 – 186 mos).

*CoSA comes to an end. If the circle closes as a result of a breach, volunteers are reassigned to other circles.*

*At another case study site, on the other hand, a formal circle is only one form of support for core members, as CoSA is conceptualized as a broad community-based support. At this site, circles rarely come to an end, as support for the core member continues beyond the formal weekly or bi-weekly circle meeting. Over time, the meetings become less frequent and the focus becomes one of friendship and support.*

*The provision of primary support.* In the initial stages, the circle is very focused on helping the core member adjust to the more practical issues related to life outside of prison (e.g., managing the conditions of 810 orders, long term supervision orders, and probation orders, finding housing, accessing food banks, obtaining employment, drivers licenses, etc.). As the circle members become more familiar with one another, they can begin to address more complex issues (e.g., triggers for re-offending, danger of breaching, self-harm, family issues, self-pity, frustration and anger). For some, the circle ultimately evolves into more of a friendship, what one circle volunteer described as a “give and take relationship.” According to one core member, “I guess I used CoSA a lot in the beginning. A lot of frustrations, and the first year wasn’t easy here, so I relied on the opportunity to ventilate.” For another core member, circles provided the opportunity for him to talk about his crimes. As he stated:

I talk about my problems, like recently I’ve had difficulty accepting what I’ve done to my victims, so this allows me the outlet to listen and ask questions. I feel like I can get to the next step because I can talk to them.

According to another core member:

When you come out of prison, I find that I don’t belong anywhere. I don’t belong in the city that I used to live in, I don’t belong in this city where I moved, I don’t belong anywhere. My friends are all gone, you have

no more friends, and Circles of Support is kind of that anchor that you can hold on to. They’re people that you know, they’re people that you can get on the phone and contact. I can’t stress how important that is when you feel alone...I often think that it must be a little like immigrants by themselves coming to this country. And they’ve lost all of their family, all their friends, all their associates, and they’re starting all over from scratch.

*Support provided remains outside of formal system.* CoSA plays an essential role in providing primary support for integration to core members beyond more formalized support structures, a fact that seems to motivate core member commitment and continued involvement in CoSA. Both service providers and circle volunteers note that CoSA fills a gap between prison life and life after incarceration, what amounts to a valuable support service that is seen as standing outside the ‘system’, what one circle volunteer described an intermediary role between legal/correctional services and living in/integrating into society. According to one of the core members, “If I have a problem it’s easier to talk to them...because even though they’re professional it’s more like a friendly thing, it’s not like talking to the therapist or the parole, probation, so I feel more comfortable”. For another core member, it amounts to a trust issue, as he acknowledges that he has a hard time trusting anyone from inside the system. As he describes, “I feel scared to talk to someone like the therapist because you’re always afraid that if you say one thing they’ll turn it, they’re very good at handling words, and they have a way of twisting some.” According to another core member:

They’re [circle volunteers] there 24 hours a day if I need to talk about anything, which is beneficial for me. To know that outside of—because I don’t have a lot of friends or family—knowing that there’s someone there all the time, that I don’t have to rely on parole officers, somebody outside the system.

*Case Study Illustration: The Area Director for the Correctional Service Canada reported that, “Unlike Parole/Probation systems that are legal monitoring systems and thus are always in an unequal relationship, CoSA can bridge the gap between the justice system and the general community.”*

*Diversity of volunteer backgrounds.* While circle dynamics depend to a large extent on the core member himself, on where he is at in terms of transitioning into the community, how long he has been incarcerated, length of time in circle, etc., our findings also indicate that the diversity of volunteer backgrounds and experience plays a key role in creating a positive circle dynamic (Saunders & Wilson, 2003). Diverse backgrounds means that each volunteer brings a different skill set to the circle, providing the core member with a variety of points of view, advice, and experiences. One circle volunteer did caution, however, that although “it is good to have a range [within a circle], the range should be based on the core member’s demographic”. Overall, our findings suggest that the circle volunteers are key to what makes CoSA work—they volunteer their time and are not perceived by core members as part of the system.

*Friendship as key to success.* The relationship between the core member and circle volunteers is essential to the success of CoSA (Weaver, 2013). For many of the core members we interviewed, the circle not only provides the support they require to adjust to life outside of prison, but also represents friendship in what is otherwise a very lonely and solitary existence. As one of the core members explains, “It’s like having a friend when you really, really feel so alone.” This friendship also extends beyond the boundaries of the circle, as core members and circle volunteers get together for recreational activities, coffee and volunteer jobs. Core members describe trips to the YMCA, gardening activities, movies, dinner, and birthday celebrations. According to one of the core members, circle volunteers “are fully involved in my life and they are going to stay that way.” Another core member says, “For me, they’re

an extension of famil.” Another core member added, “When a special time comes, you don’t feel so...you don’t feel so down.” What starts off as an “intentional friendship” (Weaver, 2013) over time deepens to what for many circle volunteers and core members describe as a real friendship, a fact that may help explain the endurance of the relationship long after the circle has officially closed.

*The balance of support and accountability.* Interviews with circle volunteers further indicate that the balance between support and accountability depends on the needs of the core member, their experiences, and what they are experiencing in terms of their release conditions. As one of the circle volunteers explained:

There are times when things are going well and when things are not going well. It is a bit of a rollercoaster—so the balance of support and accountability changes. When things are going well the accountability aspect is much less.

We also note that at some CoSA sites, the balance between support and accountability evolves and shifts over time. Whereas initial circle conversations are more formal and related to accountability, as the circle progresses the conversation becomes more casual, depending upon the core member, the length of time in the circle, comfort levels and level of trust.

*Case Study Illustration: Case studies further indicate that the notions of support and accountability vary across program sites, with some sites maintaining a fairly structured approach to accountability where it is always a predominant aspect of the circle, whereas with other sites, the balance between support and accountability shifts and changes along with the evolution and need of the circle and with the dynamics of the friendship.*

*At one site, volunteers note that the challenge with maintaining the balance is determining when they should be supportive and when they insist the core members should take responsibility for themselves and their actions. One circle volunteer wrote about how he wonders whether his support for the core member’s every need actually encourages co-dependence, and the extent to which the circle volunteers should advocate for their core member versus letting them suffer the consequences of their actions.*

# Outcome Questions

Outcome questions focus on whether CoSA has made a difference in terms of outcomes and what the expected and unexpected results are across sites. Based on a revised program theory, these questions (O-10, O-11, O12 and O-13) have been re-conceptualized in this final report to enable us to explore outcomes for core members at a micro and macro level, as well as general outcomes for the program as a whole. The delineation of outcomes at the micro and macro levels is intended to help us capture a progression from immediate outcomes that lead to outcomes at a more macro level (e.g., in terms of recidivism and risk reductions; no more victims).

## ***O-10: To what extent are program outcomes being attained? Were there any unintended***

<b>Lines of Evidence</b>	
Interviews with CV	√
Interviews with Site Staff	√
Survey circle volunteer	√
Case Studies	√

<b>Indicators</b>
# of circles coordinated
# of core members involved in CoSA
# of circle volunteers involved in CoSA
# of trained volunteers
Decisions made with the support of committees and boards
Connections and networks developed with community service providers

## ***outcomes experienced?***

*The use of demonstration project funding* NCPC funding, as noted through interviews with site coordinators and case studies, has enabled CoSA sites to expand their projects significantly (increasing the number of core members and circle volunteers) and develop extensive program infrastructures (establishing office and staff protocols, training materials, active boards of directors, active steering committees, and established relationships with

a broad range of community service providers and police/probation). However, while NCPC funding has enabled sites to achieve specific program outcomes in terms of the retention rates of circle volunteers, a sustainable ratio of circle volunteers to core members, and established institutional connections and support, it has not led to the identification of sustainable funding sources across project sites. See Figure 1 (page 9) for growth.

*Community networks.* Our findings indicate that NCPC funding has enabled sites to establish strong community and institutional connections and support over the period of the demonstration project. The establishment of partnerships supports the work of CoSA in terms of core member recruitment, circle volunteer recruitment, training, steering committee decision making and site governance; it has also helped with building linkages and awareness within the broader community.

*Retention rates.* Our findings indicate that circle volunteers are very satisfied with their involvement in CoSA activities. We note a high retention rate among circle volunteers across all project sites, a finding that speaks to the dedication of this volunteer group. Regarding the reasons given for becoming a CoSA volunteer, forty-seven percent of survey respondents volunteer with CoSA as a way to make a contribution to the community, fulfill religious obligations/beliefs (17%), gain experience in the field of restorative justice (16%), or because they know someone who has been affected by an offender (11%).

We also note that high retention rates among circle volunteers have led to a sustainable ratio of core member to circle volunteers, thus ensuring that core members can become part of a circle fairly quickly, with a circle composition that fits the individual core member's needs. Case studies illustrate that in

sites where there are not sufficient numbers of circle volunteers available for a circle, core members are nonetheless introduced to CoSA through other community and faith-based activities.

**O-11: To what extent were micro-level**

Lines of Evidence	
Interviews with circle volunteers	√
Interviews with core members	√
Survey-circle volunteers	√
Case studies	√
Journals-circle volunteers	√

Indicators
Relationships developed between CMs and CVs
Behaviour modeled
Connections made with community service providers

*outcomes being attained? What are the effects of the program on participants? Were there any unintended micro-level outcomes experienced?*

This question is designed to address the fact that it is difficult to generalize across all core members, as much of their experience in the circle depends upon how long they have been incarcerated, the conditions of their release, their past experiences, and their index offense. As such, for this question we are reporting on what we have found to be micro-level outcomes, with the understanding that there is no linear process of change that all core members adhere to during their experience with CoSA. Our response to this question is framed by our findings related to the relationship between core members and circle volunteers, behaviour modeling, and connections made to relevant service providers.

*Specific outcomes.* For many core members, the transition from life in prison to life out in the community is challenging. CoSA provides many core members with the support (friendship, encouragement, motivation) and basic needs (food, shelter and health) that they require for life outside of prison. Interviews with core members suggest that their experience in the circle is reflective of how long they have spent in the prison system.

The longer they have been incarcerated, the more institutionalized they will likely be, and hence the more reliant on their circle volunteers for helping them transition to life outside of prison. As one of the core members described:

They [circle volunteers] were there to support me when I got out. You might be able to figure out better words than I can. You know what I mean? Because they got me housing, they helped me get clothes, they helped me adjust to society.

Circle volunteers also provide essential role modeling in prosocial skills. According to a circle volunteer:

One nice thing about the exchange of how is your day, how your week has gone is that the guys see from us what real life is like. Because they are coming out of a really strange life, and we can illustrate how our weeks are going and it gives them an idea of, “ah, that’s what it should be like.”

Even though we have said it is difficult to generalize, many core members do share similar challenges. Among the most common are loneliness and isolation, lack of employment, ongoing issues with drugs and alcohol, chronic health issues, lack of community acceptance, transitioning from prison to the outside world, lack of confidence, and living within the confines of their release conditions. Circles help address these core member issues by providing support, friendship, encouragement, the opportunity to reflect and vent, different points of view, and connections to community and health services. As one of the core members reflected:

When you come out of prison, I find that I don’t belong anywhere. I don’t belong in the city that I used to live in. I don’t belong in this city where I moved. I don’t belong anywhere. My friends are all gone, you have no more friends, and Circles of Support is kind of that anchor that you can hold on to. They’re people that you know, they’re people that you can get on the phone and contact, and I can’t stress how

important that is when you feel alone. And you really have to be in that position to understand what I mean when I say you feel alone.

*Circle limitations.* Our findings further illustrate that changes in a core member’s behaviour take time and sustained effort, as well as significant community resources. According to one of the circle volunteers:

The core member now recognizes that it is going to be a journey in terms of moving forward—not everything will happen at once. The core member has changed in his ability to share and be forthcoming with all the things that are happening in his life. He has blossomed.

At the same time, our findings confirm that despite all of the support and accountability provided in circles, there nonetheless remain limitations to integration. For example, housing, employment, and mental health concerns often pose ongoing challenges for many core members. Reflecting challenges to do with community acceptance mentioned above, some core members find they must move frequently, because once neighbours learn who they are and what their history is, they are no longer welcome in the neighborhood. The fact that circle volunteers continue to provide friendship and support long after a formal circle has closed, may well be an indication that the core member still has ongoing needs that are not being met outside CoSA.

Lines of Evidence	
CM observed recidivism data	√
STABLE 2007 assessments	√
Indicators	
Reduction in recidivism rates	
Reduction in Stable 2007 scores	
Level of CM success in terms of integration in a community	

***O-12: What were the macro-levels changes in recidivism, risk and integration?***

*Recidivism.* This analysis is based on data collected from CoSA sites regarding whether or not a core member had been charged or convicted of a reoffence (sexual or non-sexual), or if they breached conditions during their time in CoSA. Further background information on release date, release status, target population, whether or not the core member was a repeat offender, circle start and end date, and number of months incarcerated after breach or reoffence were collected. The main limitation of this analysis is that it is based on site records only rather than official records. Sites typically learn of breaches or reoffences from the core members themselves while in the program. Therefore, this data is certainly an underestimation of core member recidivism rates, as it does not take into account any recidivistic events that occurred while the core member was not involved in CoSA (e.g., following dropout or graduation), which would increase the rate. More precisely, the rates computed here can be described as “time-in-CoSA” recidivism rates.

*Survival Analysis.* The CoSA recidivism rates were computed using censored Kaplan-Meier (K-M) survival analysis (Goel, Khanna, Kishore, 2010). Survival refers to the length of time a core member has remained in the community offence-free, with our observation period for the current study confined to the time the core member was involved in CoSA. The mean observation period (time in CoSA while at risk for reoffense) is 33. 7 months ±35.5 months. The cumulative probability of sexual reoffending was analyzed at three-, five-, and ten-year intervals<sup>9</sup>. The overall rate of sexual recidivism observed for core members involved in CoSA is 2.0%, 5.6%, and 9.5% for three, five and ten years respectively. See Table 5 for the CoSA recidivism rates stratified by both type of offence (i.e., sexual vs. non-sexual) and release status.

Figure 4 (next page) displays CoSA’s K-M survival graphs, broken down by release status. In these

9 Some core members included in the Demonstration Project have been with CoSA for ten or more years.

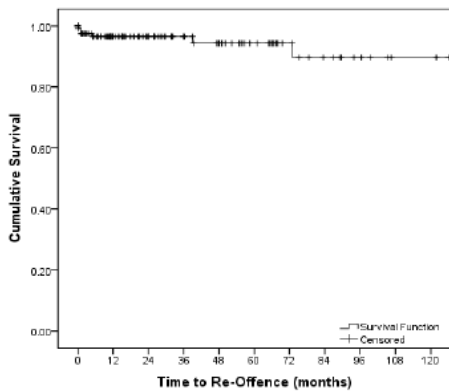
Table 5: Observed CoSA Recidivism Rates (%)

		3 year rate	5 year rate	10 year rate
<b>WED</b>	<b>Sexual</b>	3.23	5.28	9.80
	<b>Non-Sexual</b>	3.20	3.20	6.42
<b>LTSO</b>	<b>Sexual</b>	0.00	11.10	11.10
	<b>Non-Sexual</b>	2.27	2.27	2.27
<b>Overall</b>	<b>Sexual</b>	2.0	5.6	9.5
	<b>Non-Sexual</b>	2.9	2.9	5.5

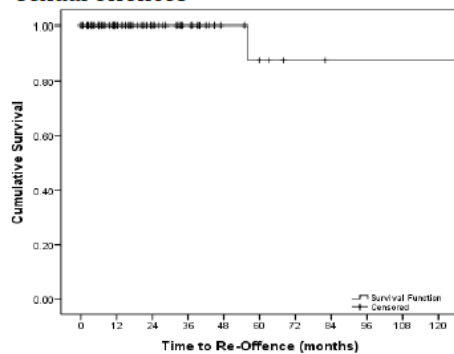
graphs, each time an offence is committed, the number of core members living offence-free in the community drops. Over time, the number of core members who have experienced a recidivistic

event accumulates, thereby contributing to a greater rate of recidivism over time. Furthermore, as time goes on, the population of core members included in the survival analysis decreases due to censoring<sup>10</sup>.

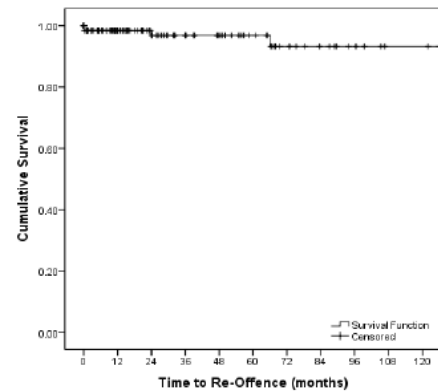
Figure 4: Kaplan-Meier Survival Analysis



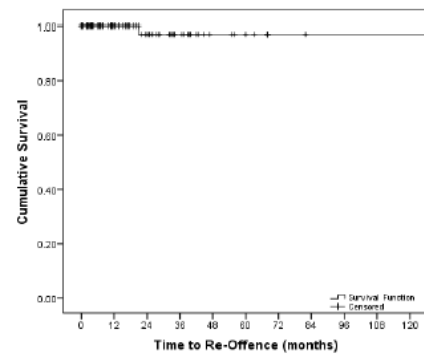
Survival analysis of WED offenders for sexual offences



Survival analysis of LTSO offenders for sexual offences



Survival analysis of WED offenders for non-sexual offences



Survival analysis of LTSO offenders for non-sexual offences

<sup>10</sup> Ideally, all individual cases within a given survival analysis are accessible throughout the entire time horizon of the study, and exit the sample only as a result of experiencing the event of interest (e.g., recidivism). Unfortunately, however, real applications of survival analysis are rarely straightforward. Individuals are usually lost throughout the study period for reasons other than a recidivistic event. In the case of the CoSA program, which has a rolling intake design, follow-up times vary widely across CMs, ranging from ten years to one year or less. In addition, CMs may drop out of the program at any point and are therefore inaccessible through all but official police and corrections records (which were not available for the current study). Therefore, not all CMs are able to be observed throughout the entire time horizon of the analysis (e.g., whether 3 years, 5 years, or 10 years), in order to determine if a sexual or other type of offence has taken place. Nonetheless, one does not want to simply remove such cases from the analysis, as critical information would be lost. Rather, the idea is to observe all cases as long as possible, treating individuals who become unavailable within a given time period as “censored” beyond that period; in other words, their trajectories (i.e., either offended or offence-free) are considered blocked from further follow-up (Klein & Moeschberger, 2003; Prinjsa, Gupta, & Verma, 2010; Sedgwick, 2013).



See Appendix H for the full Kaplan-Meier tables used to determine the rates of recidivism.

Associations between background variables and offending. In terms of breaches, 35.8% of core members breached their conditions. Core members were significantly more likely to breach conditions if they had an LTSO compared to those with WED/810 orders ( $\chi^2$  (df=1, N=241)=14.475,  $p<0.001$ ).

There was no significant difference in non-sexual re-offence rates between core members with LTSO and WED (One-tailed Fisher's Exact test; df=1, N=241,  $p=0.202$ ) or in sexual re-offence rates between ore

members LTSO and WED (One-tailed Fisher's Exact test, df=1, N=241,  $p=0.443$ ).

The majority of core members who breached or who were charged and convicted of a reoffence were held a diagnosis for pedophilia (33.3%). Repeat sexual offenders were more likely to breach or be charged with a reoffence; however, when it comes to an actual conviction, we observed no difference in terms of whether or not the core member was a repeat offender. See Tables 6 and 7 for a further breakdown.

*Comparing CoSA recidivism rates to normative baselines.*  
No contemporaneous comparison group—that is,

Table 6. Breaches and Re-Offenses according to original victim type

<b>Victim Target Population</b>	<b>Breaches</b>	<b>Re-Offence (charge)</b>	<b>Re-Offence (charged and convicted)</b>
Male <13	27.4%	12.5%	33.3%
Female <13	22.1%	25.0%	33.3%
Male 14-18	9.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Female 14-18	15.8	50.0%	16.6%
Male 19+	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Female 19+	23.1%	12.5%	16.6%

Table 7: Breaches and Re-Offence according to repeat status

	<b>Breaches</b>	<b>Re-Offence (charge)</b>	<b>Re-Offence (charged and convicted)</b>
Repeat Offender	61.3%	77.8%	50.0%
First time Offender	38.7%	22.2%	50.0%

Table 8: Baseline Rates of Recidivism from Literature

<b>Researchers</b>	<b>Recidivism Type</b>	<b>Follow Up Period</b>	<b>Recidivism Rate</b>
Wilson, Cortoni, & McWhinnie (2009)	Sexual Recidivism	3 Years	27.78%
Hanson, Harris, Helmus & Thornton (2014)	Sexual Recidivism	5 years	22.0%
	Sexual Recidivism	10 years	28.8%

Table 9: Percentage Reduction in Sexual Recidivism (%)

		<b>3 year rate</b>	<b>5 year rate</b>	<b>10 year rate</b>
WED	Sexual	88.4	76.0	66.0
LTSO	Sexual	100.0	49.5	61.5
Overall	Sexual	92.8	74.5	67.0

a comparison group of high-risk sexual offenders released to the community with no support and accountability structure—was available for assessing CoSA vs. non-CoSA recidivism rates. Therefore, potential reductions in recidivism rates under CoSA were estimated by comparing normative baselines from longitudinal follow-up studies of sex offenders released into the community—in particular, the three-year rate for the matched comparison group presented in the Wilson et al. (2009) evaluation of CoSA, and the five-and ten-year rates for high-risk sex offenders from the meta-analysis by Hanson, Harris, Helmus, & Thornton (2014)—with the CoSA recidivism rates obtained from site records. The formula used to determine the reduction =  $\text{Baseline rate} - \text{CoSA rate} / \text{Baseline rate} \times 100$ .

Overall, while core members are involved in a CoSA, sexual recidivism was reduced by 92.8%, 74.5%, and 67.0% over three, five and ten years respectively. See Table 8 for the literature baseline rates; see Table 9 for the breakdown in percent reductions according

Figure 5: STABLE scores for each of the three assessments

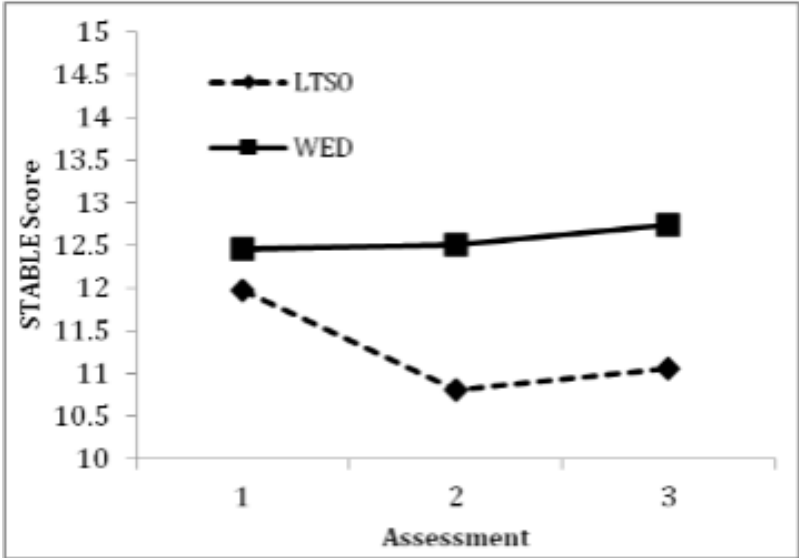


Table 10: Stable scores according to release status (mean±SD (min-max))

Stable Assessment Time	WED/810	LTSO
Assessment 1	12.46±4.85 (2-24)	12.19±4.50 (6-26)
Assessment 2	12.50±5.62 (2-27)	10.81±4.11 (4-24)
Assessment 3	12.74±5.49 (1-26)	10.89±4.63 (3-24)

to release status (i.e., LTSO vs. WED).

*STABLE Assessment.* This tool was intended to be used as a way to assess the dynamic risk factors of each core member three times over six month intervals. See Appendix F for the assessment scoring aid. The purpose was to enable sites to address the key risk domains in a standardized and systematic way, as well as to assess whether risk decreased over time. Although we did not identify any significant reduction in STABLE scores during this time, sites did note the impact of completing the STABLE on their understanding of core member needs, a significant finding in itself and one that requires further exploration through interviews with site staff and volunteers.

We found that there were no significant differences between mean STABLE scores between the three assessments (repeated measures MANOVA,  $F(2,93)=0.568, p=0.569$ ).

There was a near-significant difference between the change in STABLE scores from the initial to final assessment between LTSO and WED CMs (t-test,  $F(1,91)=3.819, R^2_{adj}=0.030, p=0.0538$ ), such that LTSO CMs had a mean decrease in STABLE scores of 1.30 and WED CMs had a mean increase in STABLE scores of 0.28 (Figure 5).

There are no significant differences between each assessment for either WED or LTSO offenders. However, the change between assessment one and two for LTSOs was near significant (p-value = 0.08).

Change in Scores by Victim Type: There was no significant difference in the mean STABLE score for each of the three assessments between CMs who offended against males < 13 years, females <13 years, males 14-18 years, females 14-18 years, males 19+ years, and females 19+ years (ANOVA, all p-values >0.36).

There were no significant differences between the mean STABLE score change from the initial to the final assessment for each of the 6 victim types (ANOVA,  $F(5,109)=0.467$ ,  $p=0.800$ ). Further, post-hoc comparisons using a Tukey-Kramer test showed no significant difference between mean STABLE score changes between each victim type.

Change in Scores by Time-At-Risk: There were no significant differences between the mean STABLE scores of each of the three assessments for LTSO CMs or WED CMs with times at risk of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5+ years (repeated measures MANOVA, all ten p-values > 0.15).

*Feedback comments from STABLE 2007 assessment:* Despite the lack of significant findings, sites nonetheless noted the impact of the process of completing the STABLE 2007 assessment.

- An appreciation for the consistency the tool provided in examining where core members are at six-month intervals.
- It was useful in generating a picture of how core members are doing.
- Some questions will now be routinely used to aid the circle in gaining a better understanding of the core member.

Thus, while we did not find any significant differences in Stable scores between the assessment dates, we nonetheless can conclude among the outcomes of participating in the STABLE assessments:

- a) an example of, “process use” (Patton, 2008), whereby participants, through engagement in the evaluation learn from the evaluation process itself and
- b) that CoSA is now utilizing an empirically-validated instrument relevant

to sexual offending to assess change in their core members in areas that are important to the prevention of sexual abuse.

*Success.* A secondary macro-level change is the extent to which core members successfully integrate or become part of a community as a result of their participation in CoSA. An important finding in this evaluation is that overall success cannot be determined or judged based on the number of core members who “graduate” from a circle. For many core members, CoSA has provided them with the support and friendship required to enable them to live independently (to varying degrees) and within what is essentially an intentional community, a CoSA community. In many respects, for some core members, “integration” means full acceptance within the CoSA community, a role to play there,

Lines of Evidence	
Recidivism data	√
Program funding	√
Cost of crime literature	

Indicators
-# of recidivistic events prevented as compared to cost of program
-# of recidivistic events prevented in terms of savings to society

and a way to contribute positively, even though the wider community outside CoSA may still present them with challenges and restrictions. Some core members have reported to us that within CoSA they have experienced for the first time what it means to have friends who genuinely care. That, by any measure, is a successful outcome.

### ***O-13: What is the cost effectiveness and cost benefit of the program?***

*Economic Analysis.* The following cost-effective and cost-benefit analyses were included as part of the evaluation in order to give a sense of the economic efficiency of CoSA. In a time of fiscal constraint, it is important to understand how much money

needs to be spent on a program in order to achieve the desired outcome (cost-effectiveness), and whether or not the program yields savings to society through the crimes prevented (cost-benefit).

Since accurate program expenditure records could only be obtained for the period between May 2008 and September 2014, it was necessary to calculate another five-year recidivism rate to match this period. Essentially, only core members

$$\text{Cost-Effectiveness Ratio} = \frac{\text{Total Program Cost}}{\text{Net Effect of CoSA}}$$

who started a CoSA between May 2008 and May 2014 were included in this analysis. The five-year CoSA recidivism rate for this analysis is 10.1%.

Cost-effectiveness analysis. The Cost-effectiveness ratio (CER) is defined in this report as the amount of money spent on a program to achieve the project results; more precisely, the average expenditure per unit outcome (McIntosh & Li, 2012). The following formula was used:

The total program cost is the sum of all administration costs (e.g., staff salaries and training materials), capital costs (e.g., rental of office and/or meeting spaces), and indirect costs (e.g., the cost of travel incurred by volunteers) (McIntosh & Li, 2012). CoSA received \$7,400,000 from NCPC and \$4,192,742.45 from other funders between October 2009 and September 2014; plus \$1,103,775 from CSC and other non-governmental sources between May 2008 and October 2009. Therefore, the *Total Program Cost* used in this analysis for the period of May 2008 and September 2014 is \$12,696,517.45.

The net effect of the program will be calculated according to the number of crimes potentially prevented between May 2008 and May 2014 in order to determine value-for-money throughout the duration of the Demonstration Project. To determine the number of crimes prevented, the

CoSA five year recidivism rate was compared to baseline recidivism rates in the most current recidivism study: High-Risk Sex Offenders May Not be High Risk Forever (Hanson, Harris, Helmus & Thornton, 2014). This study pooled data from 21 recidivism studies conducted between 1971 and 2007 in Canada (10 studies), the United States (5 studies), the United Kingdom (1 study), Sweden (1 study), Denmark (1 study), Germany (1 study), Austria (1 study), and New Zealand (1 study). The large sample size of this study, along with the highly prevalent Canadian data makes it the most adequate comparison study. Furthermore, this study stratifies the sample population by three levels of risk: high, medium, and low, making this study an ideal comparison for CoSA's high-risk population. One caveat with the baseline literature rates provided in this study is that some studies used only convictions to determine rates of recidivism, while the CoSA rates of recidivism are based on both charges and convictions. See Table 4 in Appendix E for baseline literature rates.

The next step is to calculate the number of theoretical recidivistic events prevented. To illustrate this concept, imagine there were two groups of people who had sexually offended. One group was involved in CoSA, and the other was not (i.e., the high-risk offenders sampled in the Hanson et al. (2014) study). We follow these groups for five years and find out that the offenders involved in CoSA actually had fewer offenses than the offenders not involved in CoSA. The difference in the number of offenses can be called the 'theoretical events prevented', because participation in CoSA potentially prevented these events from occurring. Unfortunately, we did not have a comparison group for the purpose of this evaluation, and so we had to determine the number of theoretical events prevented by

$$(\text{Rate Literature} - \text{Rate CoSA}/100) \times \text{literature sample size (n=1,992)}$$

projecting the CoSA recidivism rate onto the high-risk sample in the Hanson et al. (2014) study (n=1,992). Therefore, the current impact analysis is essentially a projection based on a retrospective counterfactual, centered on the question: If all of the high-risk offenders included in the Hanson et al. (2014) meta-analysis had been involved in CoSA, what would have been the rate of recidivism? To answer this question, the following formula was used:

Furthermore, to calculate an accurate cost-effectiveness ratio, the rates of recidivism must match the period in which the *Total Program Cost* was determined. That is, the period between May 2008 and May 2014. For this six-year interval, the CoSA five-year recidivism rate is 10.1% (for sexual offences of both WED and LTSO offenders).

Therefore, the five-year cost-effectiveness ratio (CER) of CoSA is: \$12,696,517.45/240.43 (event potentially prevented) = \$52,806.60. This ratio indicates the amount of money that must be spent to achieve the desired outcomes. For instance, for CoSA to prevent one case of sexual recidivism from happening within five years of release, the cost is \$52,806.60. Ideally, this ratio could be

$$\text{Cost-Benefit Ratio} = \frac{\text{Potential Societal Savings} \times \text{Net Effects of Program (crimes prevented)}}{\text{Total Program Costs}}$$

Cost-benefit analysis. This type of analysis is used to determine whether the savings to society, in terms of crimes prevented, outweigh the cost of implementing a program (Levin and McEwan, 2001). Essentially, a cost-benefit analysis extends a cost-effectiveness analysis by assigning a dollar value to the program outcomes; in other words, the outcomes are “monetized.” More specifically, the following formula was used:

The costs of specific crimes, which can also be directly interpreted as the potential societal savings that can be realized if those crimes are prevented, have been estimated in the literature. Of particular relevance to the current CBA of CoSA, the most recent crime costing study estimates the cost of a rape and/or sexual assault crime at \$240,776.00

$$\text{CBR} = (\$240,776.00) \times (240.43 \text{ theoretical events prevented}) / \$12,696,517.45$$

*Table 11: Values used to determine CoSA’s cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit between May 2008 and May 2014*

<b>5 Year Fixed Period (5/2008 – 5/2014)</b>				
	Sexual Recidivism Rate	Theoretical Events Prevented	Cost-Effectiveness Ratio	Cost Benefit Ratio
WED/810	7.5%	292.8	43,358.9	5.6
LTSO	25%	n/a*	n/a*	n/a*
Overall	10.13%	240.43	52,806.6	4.6

\*Calculations could not be completed as the LTSO recidivism rate of 25% is higher than the baseline Hanson et al. (2014) rate of 22% for the high-risk group. However, our LTSO rate is only based on 4 individuals who survived for five years.

used in comparison with other sexual recidivism reduction programs to determine which is most cost-effective; however, the limitations of the data precludes this type of comparison, and so this ratio can only be used as a rough estimate of the cost-effectiveness of CoSA. See Table 10 for all the values used and a further breakdown between the release statuses of WED vs. LTSO offenders.

(McHollister, French & Fang, 2010). This estimate includes both the tangible costs of crime such as criminal justice system costs, loss of productivity, short-term medical costs, lost earnings, and property damage; as well as the intangible costs of crime such as pain and suffering (McHollister et al., 2010).

Therefore, the CBR of CoSA over a five-year period (between May 2008 and May 2014) is 4.6. This ratio indicates the savings to society by CoSA. It means that every dollar invested in CoSA to prevent a recidivistic event within five years is worth \$4.60 in savings to society. See Table 5 in Appendix D for the breakdown between release statuses.

See Appendix G for the full Kaplan Meier tables used to determine the rates of recidivism calculated for the fixed five-year period between May 2008 and May 2014 used for both the cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis.

One issue with this calculation is that the CER and CBR for LTSO offenders could not be calculated because their five-year recidivism rate of 25% is higher than the comparison literature of 22.0% in the Hanson et al. (2014) study. However, it should be noted that this rate is only based on four LTSO core members.

## Conclusion

The following conclusions are derived through the integration, synthesis and triangulation across evidence derived from the findings as they relate to each of the evaluation's specific questions.

- In this evaluation we found that CoSA likely adds to the reduction in the number of recidivistic events among core members while they remain involved in CoSA.
- Although we found that CoSA has a positive effect on recidivism insofar as it would appear to reduce the rate of recidivism among its core members, the extent to which core members are integrated with society remains unclear. This is an area that requires further definition and research. For instance, what do we mean by the phrase, "integrated with society"? Is it a valid criterion? We found integration to be related to length of incarceration, past familial and childhood history, level of mental functioning, level of risk, and ultimately an individual's social capital.

- What CoSA does really well, is to help core members transition from incarceration to living within a community, helping to meet their basic physical, emotional, and social needs, providing role modeling of healthy, prosocial behaviors, and ultimately building social capital. Based on principles of a general personality and social psychology of criminal conduct, and social network theory, we can make clear connections between initial influencing variables (where the core member comes from, etc.), the structure and characteristics that define the circle, the circle dynamics themselves, leading to specified outcomes, which also include varying levels of integration for core members. Thus, it seems the concept of 'integration' itself must be considered along a continuum, from full integration to partial or little integration, and what reasonable expectations for high-risk sexual offenders might look like. It is precisely this point that needs further study.

- The cost-effectiveness ratio of CoSA is \$52,806.00. This is the amount of money that needs to be spent on a single circle over five years for CoSA to achieve the project results; more precisely, the average expenditure per unit outcome. The cost-benefit ratio of CoSA is \$4.60. This is an extension of the cost-effectiveness ratio and goes further to indicate that every dollar invested in CoSA to prevent a recidivistic event is worth \$4.60 in savings to society in terms of justice system costs, medical costs, loss of productivity, and pain and suffering.

- The Demonstration Project provides evidence that additional resources will ensure project growth in terms of project infrastructure, increased number of core members and circle volunteers, and stronger and broader connections with community service providers. It must be noted that the Demonstration Project funding has apparently not yet succeeded in establishing the long term sustainability of CoSAs across the country, and as such, many sites have had to scale back much of the progress they have made over the last five years.

The problem of ensuring funding for a highly stigmatized population (i.e., sexual offenders) will continue to be a daunting prospect in terms of finding a balance between providing additional resources to allow CoSA to grow, and addressing the real challenges of restorative justice through broadening community understanding and awareness.

- CoSA works because of the relationships established in the circles. Core members come out of prison with no family, friends, or support in society; many of them are institutionalized after having spent many years in prison; many have a history of sexual abuse and deprived upbringings. CoSA works in large part because, for many core members, this is the first time in their lives that they are engaging in healthy relationships with people who genuinely care about their well-being and who aren't being paid to spend time with them. And so, it is the relationship itself, as well as its volunteer nature, that is fundamental to CoSA's success.
- CoSA's circle volunteers are highly committed, compassionate advocates for the work that they do in circle with core members, and highly committed to restorative justice principles. As such, circle volunteers are ultimately CoSA's greatest asset.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were provided by EAC members, the majority of whom participated in a final telephone conference call in September 2014.

- Most of the quantitative data included in this evaluation came directly from individual CoSA sites, a fact that impacted its overall use and reliability. To ensure that future evaluations have the data required to evaluate recidivism rates and conduct a long-term recidivism study with official records (CPIC, OMS data), an arrangement between interested/governing agencies needs to be negotiated as soon as possible to ensure that

this data is collected and maintained centrally.

- Future evaluations should ensure equal focus on French and Atlantic regions, as this was lacking in this evaluation since the CSRQ case study was not completed. Furthermore, at the start of the evaluation it was deemed necessary to choose only large sites for case studies; however, in hindsight, it would have been equally enlightening to study a small or new site. Future evaluations should include a greater cross-section of sites, including those that are less developed or just getting underway.

- STABLE: This evaluation used the STABLE 2007 assessment only to improve understanding of the changes over time on clinically relevant factors associated with sexual offending behavior. We note that the STABLE 2007 can also be used to guide the circle and respond to an individual's criminogenic needs. Although we did note that this was beginning to happen in some sites, this finding was not captured formally within the context of this evaluation. We recommend that future evaluations further study the potential impact the STABLE 2007 has on circle functioning. At the same time, we would recommend that everyone involved in collecting STABLE data on core members receive the same level of training and ensure training is provided on an ongoing (as needed) basis.

- This evaluation just touched on the concept of 'integration'. We recommend that future evaluations further define and measure the extent to which core members integrate in a) the CoSA community and b) the community in general, perhaps using social network theory as a point of departure.

- Given the challenges we experienced in collecting accurate and comprehensive data from individual sites, we would recommend that in future, sites devote more time to record keeping to ensure that future evaluations will have the data required for the evaluation.



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# Appendices

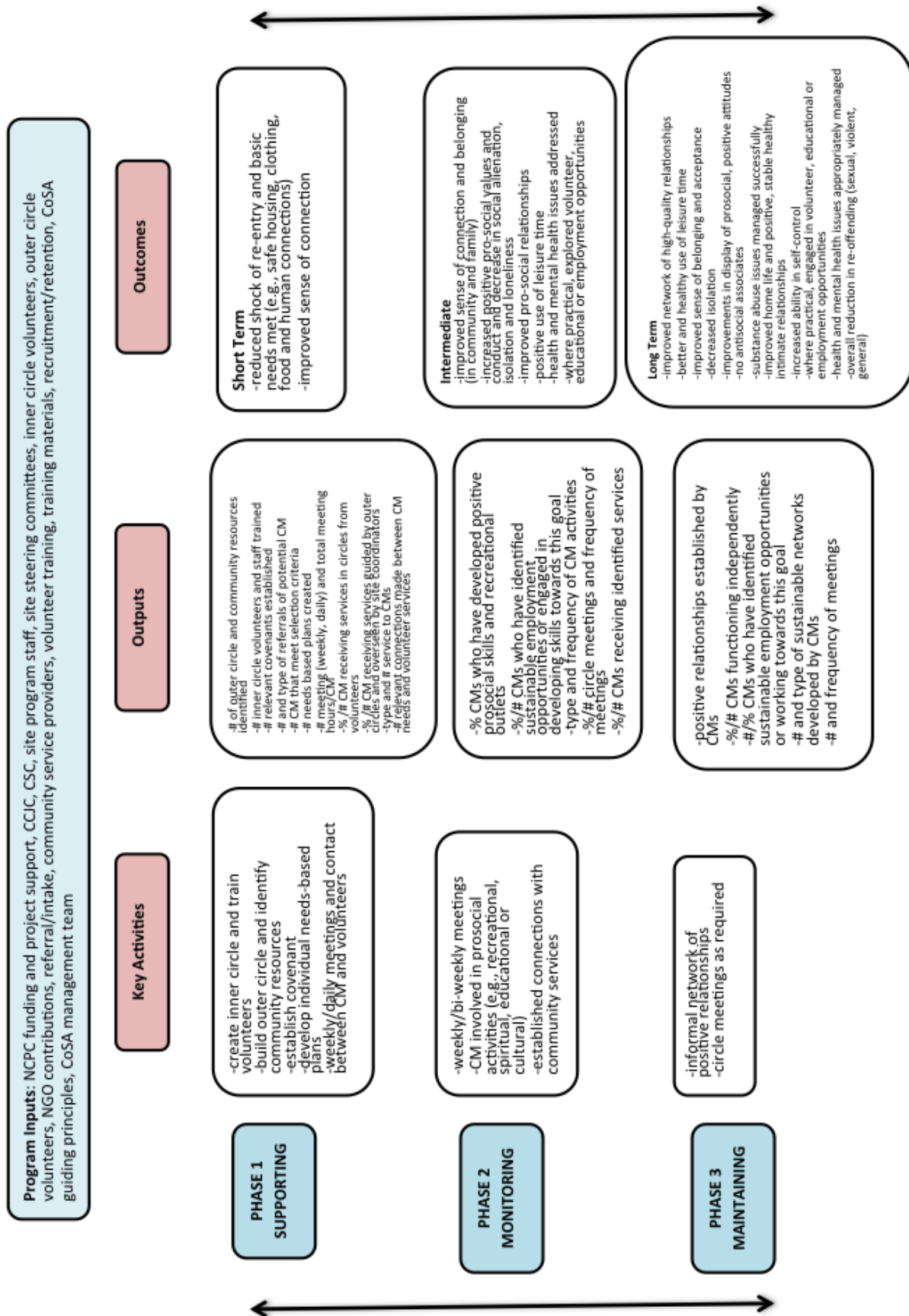
## Appendix A: Evaluation Framework for the CoSA Demonstration Project

Evaluation Questions and Issues	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Bases for Comparison
<b>PROCESS QUESTIONS</b>				
<p>P-1 What is the program theory underlying CoSA?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do activities, outputs and outcomes inter-relate?</li> <li>• Is the program theory consistent across program sites (program fidelity)?</li> <li>• What are notable differences across sites (e.g., balance between accountability and support)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-common themes across program sites</li> <li>-common themes among program stake holders</li> <li>-linkages identified between activities, outputs and outcomes</li> <li>-duration, frequency of each phase/activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program documentation</li> <li>• Site staff</li> <li>• Circle volunteers</li> <li>• Core members</li> <li>• Regional Chaplains</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document analysis</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Journals</li> </ul>	Between project sites
<p>P-2 To what extent did the project reach its target population (CM)? Why or why not? What changes must be made to reach intended audience more effectively?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-total # of dropouts</li> <li>-total # of CM referred/ screened per year</li> <li>-# CM recruited meeting selection criteria/year</li> <li>-# of CM actively participating in each site/ year</li> <li>-type of CMs recruited</li> <li>-approaches to recruitment and screening across sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program documentation</li> <li>• Site staff</li> <li>• Core members</li> <li>• Regional Chaplains</li> <li>• CM recidivism data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document analysis</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Database</li> <li>• Case studies</li> <li>• Site profiles</li> </ul>	Between project sites
<p>P-3 How were project activities implemented across sites? What worked well?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What challenges and barriers have emerged as the program has been implemented?</li> <li>• How is program fidelity measured across sites?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-type of ongoing activities outside of circles</li> <li>-type of implementation challenges and barriers identified</li> <li>-range of project successes and challenges</li> <li>-Increase in total CM, CV and community partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program documentation</li> <li>• Site staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document analysis</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Site profiles</li> <li>• Case studies</li> </ul>	Between project sites

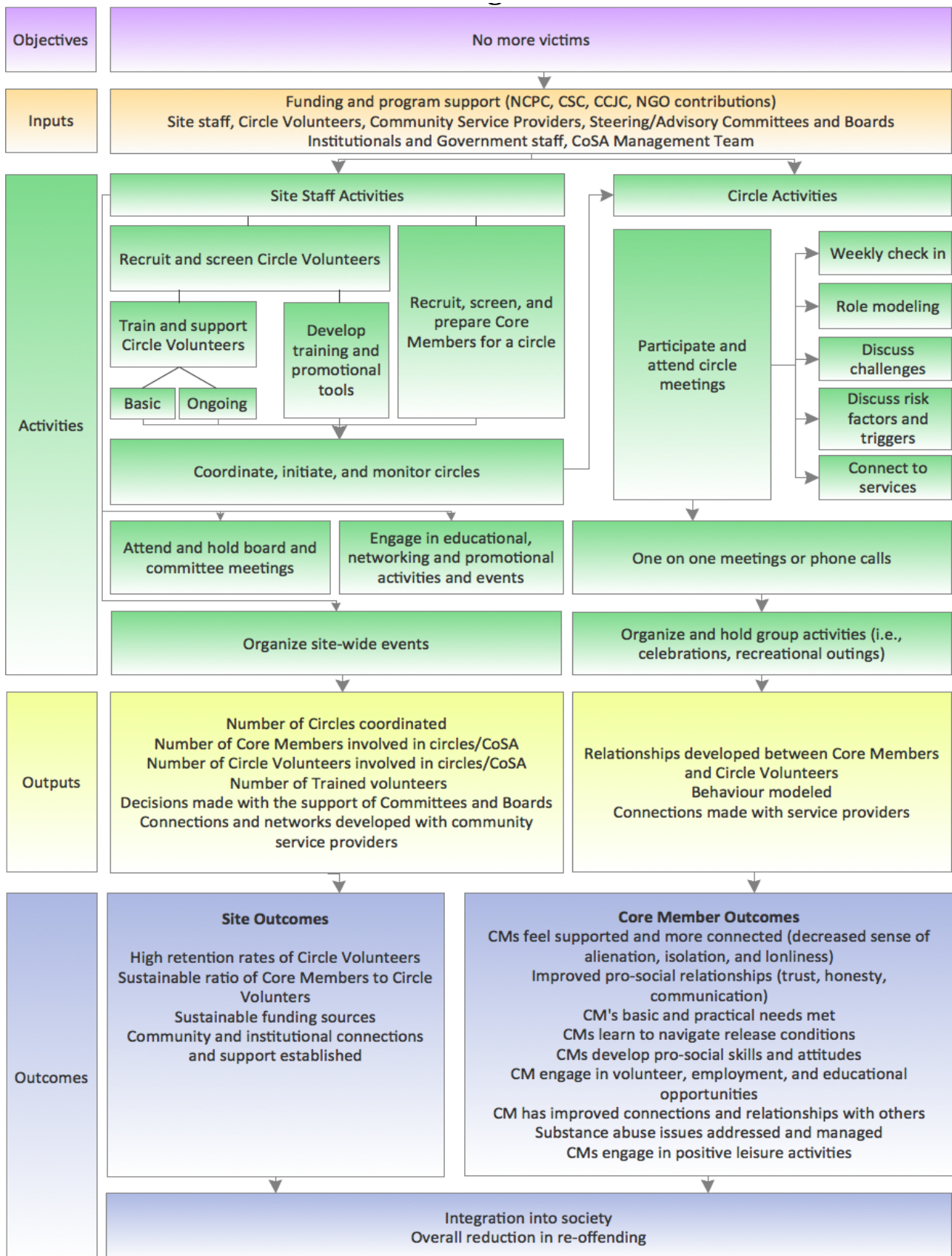
Evaluation Questions and Issues	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Bases for Comparison
P-4 How effective are CoSA's local governance structures (e.g., Advisory Panel, Steering Committee, Board of Directors) in supporting program planning and reporting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>level of satisfaction</li> <li>-range of challenges identified</li> <li>-level and quality of support provided</li> <li>-connections between CoSA and community</li> <li>-perception of community support</li> <li>-clarity of policy frameworks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program documentation</li> <li>• Site staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document analysis</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Site profiles</li> <li>• Case studies</li> </ul>	Between project sites
P-5 What resources (human, financial and material) are available for CoSA initiatives? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are resources adequate to sustain current project commitments?</li> <li>• To further expand participation in CoSA (volunteers and core members)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-level of satisfaction</li> <li>-# volunteers identified and recruited</li> <li>-# of current volunteer hours and materials used</li> <li>-# of training hours and materials</li> <li>-# CoSA staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program documentation</li> <li>• Relevant literature</li> <li>• Site staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document analysis</li> <li>• Literature review</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Case studies</li> </ul>	Between project sites
P-6 How have connections with community services been initiated? How have these connections supported the work of CoSA sites?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-# and type of community services identified and contacted</li> <li>-# and type of community service connections made</li> <li>-satisfaction with connections made</li> <li>-# outreach/network activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program documentation</li> <li>• Site staff</li> <li>• Circle volunteers</li> <li>• community service providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document analysis</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Journals</li> <li>• Site profiles</li> <li>• Case studies</li> </ul>	Between project sites
P-7 What strategies are used to recruit and retain circle volunteers? What worked well? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What challenges/barriers were identified?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-# and type of strategies used</li> <li>-# of new volunteers identified and recruited relative to the # of new CMs</li> <li>-volunteer satisfaction</li> <li>-# and type of challenges identified</li> <li>#/type of retention strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program documentation</li> <li>• Site staff</li> <li>• Circle volunteers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document analysis</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Survey</li> <li>• Site profiles</li> <li>• Case studies</li> </ul>	Between project sites
P-8 To what extent was volunteer training adequate for the intervention?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-level of satisfaction with training</li> <li>-# of training hours delivered to volunteers prior to joining a circle and after entering a circle</li> <li>-training topics covered across all sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program documentation</li> <li>• Site staff</li> <li>• Circle volunteers</li> <li>• Regional Chaplains</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document analysis</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Survey</li> <li>• Site profiles</li> </ul>	Between project sites

Evaluation Questions and Issues	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Bases for Comparison
P-9 What do core members and circle volunteers do in circles? What is working well (successes) and not working well?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-types of experiences described by CMs and volunteers</li> <li>-range of issues/problems identified</li> <li>-satisfaction with experience (CM and volunteers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program documentation</li> <li>• Site staff</li> <li>• Circle volunteers</li> <li>• Core members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document analysis</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Journals</li> <li>• Site profiles</li> <li>• Case studies</li> </ul>	Between project sites
<b>OUTCOME QUESTIONS</b>				
O-10 To what extent are program outcomes being attained? Were there any unintended outcomes experienced?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of circles coordinated</li> <li>-# of core members involved in CoSA</li> <li>-# of circle volunteers involved in CoSA</li> <li>-# of trained volunteers</li> <li>-decisions made with the support of committees and boards</li> <li>-connections and networks developed with community service providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site staff</li> <li>• Circle volunteers</li> <li>• Core members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• survey</li> <li>• Journals</li> <li>• Case studies</li> </ul>	
O-11 To what extent were micro-level outcomes being attained? What are the effects of the program on participants? Were there any unintended micro-level outcomes experienced?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-relationships developed between core members and circle volunteers</li> <li>-connections made with community service providers</li> <li>-behaviour modelled</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circle volunteers</li> <li>• Core members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Journals</li> <li>• Survey</li> <li>• Case studies</li> </ul>	
O-12 What were the macro-level changes in recidivism and risk?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-# new breaches by release status</li> <li>-# new offences by release status</li> <li>-reduction in STABLE 2007 scores</li> <li>-# core members graduated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• STABLE</li> <li>• CM recidivism data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data analysis</li> </ul>	
• O-13 What is the cost effectiveness and cost benefit of the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-# of recidivistic events prevented as compared to cost of program</li> <li>-# of recidivistic events prevented in terms of savings to society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program documentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document analysis</li> </ul>	

## Appendix B: Original CoSA Logic Model



## Appendix C: Revised CoSA Logic Model





## Appendix D: Survey and Interview Guides

### CoSA Circle Volunteer Survey

1. How did you find out about CoSA?
  - ☐ Word of mouth
  - ☐ Through the internet
  - ☐ Through a CoSA staff member
  - ☐ Saw an advertisement (poster or newspaper)
  - ☐ Attended a presentation
  - ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. What made you decide to become a CoSA volunteer? Please check all that apply.
  - ☐ To make a contribution to the community
  - ☐ To fulfill religious obligations or beliefs
  - ☐ You or someone you know has been personally affected by a sexual offender
  - ☐ Gain experience working with offenders for future employment
  - ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Approximately how many hours of training did you receive prior to entering a circle?
  - ☐ 1-8 hours
  - ☐ 9-12 hours
  - ☐ 13-15 hours
  - ☐ 16+ hours
  - ☐ No training received
  
4. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with training received prior to starting a circle

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	N/A
General orientation session						
Training workshop						
Attendance or observation of a circle meeting						
One-on-one training						
Background reading materials						
Other learning opportunities						



5. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with training received after starting a circle:

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	N/A
Ongoing training sessions						
Discussion groups						
Conference attendance						
Other additional training:						

6. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know or N/A
I feel confident in my ability to provide support and accountability to core members						
I understand my role as a circle volunteer						
I have the support and guidance I need to accomplish my volunteer activities						
My personal safety is not threatened in my role as a circle volunteer						
I receive adequate resources to do my volunteer work with CoSA						
I plan to continue as a CoSA volunteer						

7. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements concerning the dynamics of your circle:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know or N/A
Circle volunteers participate fully						
Volunteers' strengths are complementary						
The diversity of opinions among circle volunteers is respected						
One-on-one discussions with a Core Member are shared regularly among all circle volunteers						
There is a positive climate of teamwork among volunteers						
The work of my circle is not transparent						
Decision making among circle volunteers is not equally shared						
Circle volunteers do not have adequate experience to deal with core member issues						
Circle volunteers do not have adequate training to deal with core member issues						

8. Please indicate the importance of the following:

	Very important	Somewhat important	Neither	Not very important	Not at all important
Composition of circle members (age, gender, experience in a circle, etc.)					
The covenant					
The quality of the relationship between core members and circle volunteers					
Connections made with service providers					

9. Approximately how many connections do you think your circle has with service providers?  
(Service providers are individuals or organizations who provide services to CoSA and/or Core Members)

- ☐ 0-2  
☐ 3-4  
☐ 5-6  
☐ 7+  
☐ Don't know

10. What types of services are these? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Mental health services  
☐ Substance abuse services  
☐ Health services  
☐ Housing services  
☐ Employment services (training and job placement)  
☐ Financial services  
☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

11. How would you characterize your interactions with service providers?

- ☐ Very satisfied  
☐ Satisfied  
☐ Neutral  
☐ Dissatisfied  
☐ Very dissatisfied  
☐ N/A

12. Thinking about your Core Member, please indicate at what interval you observed the following:

	0-6 months	7-12 months	13 + months	Never	N/A
Established relationships between Core Members and circle volunteers					
Core Members have established positive, pro-social relationships outside of the CoSA circle					
Core Members have maintained positive, pro-social relationships outside of the CoSA circle					
Core Members have basic needs met (such as housing, clothing, food, shelter)					
Core Members have accessed community services					
Core Members have addressed their health and/or mental health issues					
Core Members have successfully managed their health and/or mental health issues					
Core Members have explored positive leisure activities					
Core Members have engaged in positive leisure activities					
Core Members have an improved sense of connection					

	0-6 months	7-12 months	13 + months	Never	N/A
Core Members have demonstrated positive pro-social values					
Core Members have experienced a decrease loneliness or alienation					
Core Members have explored educational, employment or volunteer opportunities					
Core Members have attended an educational class, volunteered or worked					
Core Members have an improved sense of belonging					
Core Members have addressed their substance and alcohol abuse issues					
Core Members have successfully managed their substance and alcohol abuse issues					
Core Members have displayed positive pro-social attitudes					
Core Members have no anti-social associates					
Core Members have experienced an improvement in their home life					
Core Members have demonstrated increased self control					

13. Please list any additional Core Member outcomes (if any) you have observed at the following intervals:
- ☐ 0-6 months: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ 7-12 months: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ 13+ months: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ N/A
14. What aspects of CoSA work well?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
15. What aspects of CoSA could be improved?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

#### Demographics

16. Please identify your current Core Member's offense-type:
- ☐ Sexual offense against boy/s (under 12 years of age)
- ☐ Sexual offense against girl/s (under 12 years of age)
- ☐ Sexual offense against youth/s (12-18 years of age)
- ☐ Sexual offense against adult (over 18 years of age)
- ☐ Don't know
17. Please identify whether your Core Member is:
- ☐ LTSO
- ☐ WED
- ☐ Don't know
18. Please indicate at which CoSA site you are located:
- ☐ Vancouver / Fraser Valley, British Columbia
- ☐ Calgary, Alberta
- ☐ Prince Albert, Saskatchewan
- ☐ South Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan
- ☐ Winnipeg, Manitoba
- ☐ Kingston, Ontario
- ☐ Peterborough, Ontario
- ☐ SWON, Ontario
- ☐ Ottawa, Ontario
- ☐ Montreal & Greater Quebec Region, Quebec
- ☐ MSCM Montreal, Quebec
- ☐ CJPM Montreal, Quebec
- ☐ Moncton, New Brunswick
- ☐ Halifax, Nova Scotia
- ☐ Would prefer not to say

19. Please indicate your age category:

- ☐ 21 to 30
- ☐ 31 to 40
- ☐ 41 to 50
- ☐ 51 to 60
- ☐ 61 to 70
- ☐ 71 +
- ☐ Would prefer not to answer

20. Are you: ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Would prefer not to answer

21. Please indicate the length of time you have been involved in a circle:

- ☐ 1 year or less
- ☐ 2-3 years
- ☐ 4-5 years
- ☐ 6 years or more

## CoSA Service Provider Survey

22. What is the nature of your involvement with CoSA?

- ☐ Work related responsibility
- ☐ Contacted by a CoSA representative
- ☐ Heard about CoSA and wanted to get involved
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

23. How long have you been involved with CoSA?

- ☐ 1 year or less
- ☐ 2-3 years
- ☐ 4-5 years
- ☐ 6 years or more

24. What types of services do you provide to Core Members? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Counselling
- ☐ Health
- ☐ Addictions
- ☐ Shelter
- ☐ Legal
- ☐ NA
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

25. What types of services do you provide to CoSA? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Advice
- ☐ Coordination
- ☐ Referrals
- ☐ NA
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

26. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know or N/A
CoSA supports the work that I do						
I have a positive working relationship with CoSA						
I have a positive working relationship with CoSA volunteers						
I have open communication with CoSA						
The work of CoSA compliments the work I do						



27. How would you describe your relationship with CoSA?
- ☐ Very satisfied
  - ☐ Satisfied
  - ☐ Neutral
  - ☐ Dissatisfied
  - ☐ Very dissatisfied
28. What would support your continued interest and commitment to CoSA? Please check all that apply.
- ☐ Additional support (CoSA, community members, etc.)
  - ☐ More communication (CoSA office, core member, circle volunteers)
  - ☐ Less time required
  - ☐ Receiving appropriate referrals
  - ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
29. Given your interactions with CoSA, what are its strengths?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
30. What could be improved?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
31. Please indicate your site:
- ☐ Vancouver / Fraser Valley, British Columbia
  - ☐ Calgary, Alberta
  - ☐ Prince Albert, Saskatchewan
  - ☐ South Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan
  - ☐ Winnipeg, Manitoba
  - ☐ Kingston, Ontario
  - ☐ Peterborough, Ontario
  - ☐ SWON, Ontario
  - ☐ Ottawa, Ontario
  - ☐ Montreal & Greater Quebec Region, Quebec
  - ☐ MSCM Montreal, Quebec
  - ☐ CJPM Montreal, Quebec
  - ☐ Moncton, New Brunswick
  - ☐ Halifax, Nova Scotia
  - ☐ Would prefer not to say

## **Interview Protocol: CoSA Site Personnel-Coordinator/Data Collector**

1. Tell me about your day-to-day CoSA responsibilities? (interactions with circle volunteers/logistics of site) (P1/P3)
2. Tell me about your greatest project implementation successes and challenges? (P3)
3. Can you describe your sites governance structures (how it functions)? How satisfied are you with the way it works (decision making, recruitment, etc.)? (P4)
4. Do you have the resources (human, financial, material) that you need to effectively manage all of your responsibilities at your site (to further expand CoSA)? Please elaborate. (P5)
5. Can you please describe any challenges in terms of either the recruitment or retention of volunteers? What recruitment/retention methods have worked particularly well? (P7)
6. How would you describe the effectiveness of your volunteer training? How satisfied are you with the level of training your volunteers received a) before entering circle and b) after entering a circle?(P8/O14)
7. How would you describe the recruitment of core members? What challenges are you facing in terms of core member recruitment? What are possible solutions? (P2)
8. A. What criteria are you using for CM recruitment? (P2)  
B. How has your criteria changed over time?
9. A. How would you define a circle (official/unofficial end of circle, structured/unstructured, covenant)? (P9)  
B. In your opinion, what makes a circle work well (circle progression)? (P9)  
C. Describe how a circle closes (both successfully and unsuccessfully). (P9) (P1)
10. A. Can you describe your relationship with service providers? (P6/O14)  
(level of satisfaction with contacts, areas for improvement)  
B. Do CV connect or interact with service providers?
11. Can you describe the extent to which you work with service provider (professionals and other community resources)? (P6) (P12)
12. In thinking about this evaluation, is there anything else that you would like to add, that your think is relevant?

## **INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: CIRCLE VOLUNTEER – CASE STUDY**

1.     A. How did you get involved with CoSA? (P7)  
       B. What made you decide to get involved? (P7)
2.     A. Describe your CoSA training (pre and post circle). Do you feel that it adequately prepared you for your work as a volunteer? (P8)  
       B. Can you think of any other training that would be beneficial?
3.     What kinds of support are provided to you as a circle volunteer? (P7)
4.     Describe what happens during a typical circle meeting? (P1/P9)
  - Activities
  - Time spent
  - Experiences
  - Role
5.     Can you describe your role in the circle? (P1)
  - balance between support and accountability
  - dynamics that make the circle work
6.     Tell me about the dynamics that make the circle challenging: (P1/P9)
  - Relationships
  - Volunteer demographics
  - Experience
7.     Tell me about the dynamics that make the circle work: (P1/P9)
  - Relationships
  - Volunteer demographics
  - Experience
8.     A. How would you describe your relationship/communication with community service providers who provide support to Core Members?  
       B. Are you satisfied with the relationship/communication you have with service providers.  
       C. If not, what would you like to change? (P6)
9.     How does the circle affect the Core Member? (Changes that you have observed throughout the duration of the circle – short, intermediate and longer term changes) Think about the Core Member with which you have had the most contact. (O10/O11/O12/O14)
10.    Can you think of anything else to add that you think is relevant, and that I have not asked you about?

## **Interview Protocol: Regional Chaplains**

1. Can you tell me about the kind of work you do with regard to CoSA in your region? (P1)
2. In your experience, how and why do you think CoSA works? (P1)  
Theory behind CoSA
3. A. Can you tell me about the role you play in identifying, screening, and transitioning a core member into the community? (P2)  
B. Can you describe your involvement in the formation of a circle? (P9)
4. A. In your experience, what are the greatest challenges in implementing a CoSA? (P3)  
B. What kinds of differences do you see across CoSA sites?
5. A. Would you describe the various local governance structures of CoSA in your region, and how it might differ from site to site? (P4)  
B. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches?
6. What are the kinds of resources required for CoSA to function effectively? (P5)
7. How involved are you in identifying community services required by CMs? Please elaborate? (P6)
8. A. How involved are you in volunteer recruitment? (P7)  
B. Can you describe some recruitment strategies?  
C. In your experience what are some of the challenges in recruiting volunteers?
9. Are you involved in providing or arranging the training of volunteers? If so, what types of training do you provide and, generally speaking, how satisfied are you with the level of training provided to the volunteers? (P8)
10. What kinds of changes have you seen in CMs over the long term? (O14)
11. If something goes wrong, for instance, if there is a re-offence or something happens with a volunteer or staff member, do you become involved? If so, what is your usual involvement? (P6)
12. How important is the role of faith in CoSA? (P1)
13. In thinking about this evaluation, is there anything else that you would like to add, that you think is relevant?

## **Interview Protocol: Core Member - Time Series (T1)**

1. How did you become involved in CoSA? (P2)
2. What made you want to get involved? (P2)
3. What do you do in a circle? (Weekly meetings and one-on-one meetings) (P1/P9)
  - Activities
  - Time spent
  - Experience with these activities
4. What is the best part of being in a circle? What is most challenging? (P9)
  - balance between accountability and support (P1)
5. How has CoSA helped you? (O10/O11)
  - housing
  - community support
  - friendship
  - work
  - can you think of anything else?
6. What are some of the challenges you have experienced since your release? (O10/O11)
7. How is being involved in CoSA helping you to address those challenges? (O10/O11)
8. What types of services/resources has CoSA connected you with? (O10/O11)
  - psychological, addictions, health, shelter
  - What are your experiences?
9. Is there anything else you would like to say about CoSA?

## **Interview Protocol: Core Member - Time Series (T2)**

1. How is everything going?
2. Why don't you start by telling me about anything that has changed in the circle or with you since we last spoke?
  - changes in volunteers
  - changes in the dynamic of the circle
  - changes in what is challenging about being in a circle
  - changes in what is good about being in a circle
  - changes in what you are discussing in the circle
  - life changes (employment, training, significant other, housing, change in orders)
3. Can you describe some recent challenges or issues that you have dealt with?  
(ask for specific examples)
4. How has your circle helped you deal with these challenges/issues?  
(again look for specifics on what they have done)
5. Any other follow up questions from the first interview---(e.g., employment, family, housing, specific issues....)
6. On a day to day basis, what would you say helps to keep you motivated? (what inspires you and how?)
  - circle
  - family
  - fear of returning to prison
  - other influences
7. Besides attending circle meetings and working (perhaps), how would you describe your typical day (what kinds of things do you do)?
8. Outside of your circle, do you do social activities with friends or family? What kinds of things do you do?
9. As you know, we are trying to get to know you a little better—how would you describe your childhood?
  - significant events
  - things most proud of
  - most important people in your life

## Appendix E: Consent Forms

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### **Core Member Consent Form**

**Project Title:** Evaluation of the CoSA Demonstration Project

**Evaluator(s):**

Jill Anne Chouinard, PhD, Lead Evaluator, [jill.jcr\\_eval@yahoo.ca](mailto:jill.jcr_eval@yahoo.ca)

Ann Morneau

Christine Riddick, BSc, Evaluator, [christine.jcr\\_eval@yahoo.ca](mailto:christine.jcr_eval@yahoo.ca)

**Purpose of the Evaluation:**

The purpose of this evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of CoSA and identify factors that have hindered or supported its successful implementation across different settings.

**Procedures:**

You are being asked to participate in one 30 minute in-person interview and two 30 minute phone interviews. With your permission, this interview will be audio recorded. You do not have to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable answering, and you can stop the interview at any time. Your involvement is completely voluntary. Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role.

**Funded by:**

This evaluation is being funded by the National Crime Prevention Centre.

**Potential Risks:**

We do not think there is anything in this evaluation that could harm you in any way. If you feel uncomfortable answering the questions please keep in mind you do not need to respond to any questions you do not want to. Information shared during this interview will not have any impact on your involvement in CoSA. Please let one of the evaluators know if you have any concerns.

**Potential Benefits:**

Your participation will help show what works, what does not work, and ultimately make CoSA better for current and future participants. Information shared during this interview will in no way impact your involvement in CoSA or directly benefit your site.

**Confidentiality:**

Confidentiality will be respected at all times. However, if at any point during the interview or after the interview, you reveal that there has been an incident that involves abuse and/or neglect of someone (or that there is a risk of such occurring) please be advised that the evaluator must, by law, report this information to the appropriate authorities.

The data from this evaluation will be written in a final report and given to the National Crime Prevention Centre. However, your identity will be kept confidential. Although we will report direct quotations from the interview all identifying information will be removed from the report. We would like to audio record all interviews. Please let us know if you would not like to be recorded.

Consent Forms will be stored separately from the interview transcripts so that it will not be possible to associate a name with any given set of responses. All hard-copy data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the lead evaluator's home office. Electronic data and recordings will be accessed on a password protected computer and be stored on a password protected external hard drive that will be locked in the lead evaluator's home office.

Access will only be granted to the evaluators. Data will be stored for a minimum of five years, after which all documents will be shredded or deleted.

**Right to Withdraw:**

Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the evaluation for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort. Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your involvement in CoSA or how you will be treated.

Should you wish to withdraw, please contact the lead evaluator (contact information is at the top of this form) so any data collected so far can be deleted or shredded. Please note that after December 2014 the final report will have been completed and it will not be possible to withdraw your data.

**Follow up:**

To obtain results from the evaluation, please contact Jill Bench, the director of the CoSA demonstration project: 613.563.1688 Ext. 102 ; [jbench@ccjc.ca](mailto:jbench@ccjc.ca) .

**Questions or Concerns:**

Contact the evaluators using the information at the top of page 1. This project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Regina Research Ethics Board on January 3, 2013. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the committee at (585-4775 or [research.ethics@uregina.ca](mailto:research.ethics@uregina.ca)). Out of town participants may call collect.

**Continued Consent:**

For the next two phone interviews we will give a brief overview of the consent form. You will then be asked to give your verbal consent to participating in the interview.

**Signed Consent:**

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided;

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the evaluation. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Researcher</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

*A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.*



## **Interview Consent Form-Site personnel**

**Project Title:** Evaluation of the CoSA Demonstration Project

**Evaluator(s):**

Jill Anne Chouinard, PhD, Lead Evaluator, [jill.jcr\\_eval@yahoo.ca](mailto:jill.jcr_eval@yahoo.ca)

Christine Riddick, BSc, Evaluator, [christine.jcr\\_eval@yahoo.ca](mailto:christine.jcr_eval@yahoo.ca)

**Purpose of the Evaluation:**

The purpose of this evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of CoSA and identify factors that have hindered or supported its successful implementation across different settings.

**Procedures:**

You are being asked to participate in either a 45-60 minute interview. With your permission, this interview will be audio recorded. You do not have to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable answering, and you can stop the interview at any time. Your involvement is completely voluntary. Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role.

**Funded by:**

This evaluation is being funded by the National Crime Prevention Centre.

**Potential Risks:**

We do not think there is anything in this survey that could harm you in any way. If you feel uncomfortable answering the questions please keep in mind you do not need to respond to any questions you do not want to. Information shared during this interview will not have any impact on your involvement in CoSA. Please let one of the evaluators know if you have any concerns.

**Potential Benefits:**

Your participation will help show what works, what does not work, and ultimately make CoSA better for current and future participants. Information shared during this interview will in no way impact your involvement in CoSA or directly benefit your site.

**Confidentiality:**

Confidentiality will be respected at all times. However, if at any point during the interview or after the interview, you reveal that there has been an incident that involves abuse and/or neglect of someone (or that there is a risk of such occurring) please be advised that the evaluator must, by law, report this information to the appropriate authorities.

The data from this evaluation will be written in a final report and given to the National Crime Prevention Centre. However, your identity will be kept confidential. Although we will report direct quotations from the interview all identifying information will be removed from the report. We would like to audio record all interviews. Please let us know if you would not like to be recorded.

Consent Forms will be stored separately from the interview transcripts so that it will not be possible to associate a name with any given set of responses. All hard-copy data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the lead evaluator's home office. Electronic data and recordings will be accessed on a password protected computer and be stored on a password protected external hard drive that will be locked in the lead evaluator's home office. Access will only be granted to the evaluators. Data will be stored for a minimum of five years, after which all documents will be shredded or deleted.

**Right to Withdraw:**

Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the evaluation for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort. Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your involvement in CoSA or how you will be treated.

Should you wish to withdraw, please contact the lead evaluator (contact information is at the top of this form) so any data collected so far can be deleted or shredded. Please note that after December 2014 the final report will have been completed and it will not be possible to withdraw your data.

**Follow up:**

To obtain results from the evaluation, please contact Jill Bench, the director of the CoSA demonstration project: 613.563.1688 Ext. 102 ; [jbench@ccjc.ca](mailto:jbench@ccjc.ca) .

**Questions or Concerns:**

Contact the evaluators using the information at the top of page 1.

This project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Regina Research Ethics Board on January 3, 2013. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the committee at (585-4775 or [research.ethics@uregina.ca](mailto:research.ethics@uregina.ca)). Out of town participants may call collect.

**Signed Consent:**

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided;

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the evaluation. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

---

*Name of Participant*

---

*Signature*

---

*Date*

---

*Researcher's Signature*

---

*Date*

*A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researchers*

## Appendix F: Stable Assessment

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### Stable Dynamic Needs Factors

**1. Significant social influences. (total all people in core member's life not paid to be with him: Positive = would give pro-social advice, Neutral = would give positive and negative advice or Negative = would give anti-social advice. Ignore the neutrals, subtract all negatives from the positives, and then score the balance.)**

0 = balance is 2+

1 = balance is 0 or 1

2 = balance is negative

**2. Lovers/intimate partners. (1. Has core member ever had a 2-year sexual and live-in relationship with an appropriate adult partner? 2. Is core member currently living in an appropriate adult relationship without obvious problems?) Note: prison marriages, legal marriages of less than 2 years do not count.**

0 = current live-in lover/partner, no obvious problems

1 = living with a lover/partner but relationship has problems (fighting, affairs, core member doesn't believe it will last) or stable dating relationship where couple is not living together.

2 = no current lover/intimate partner

**3. Emotional identification with children. (when victim is age 13 or less, sees children as little adults, core member has child-like qualities himself, relates to children as peers, prefers the company of children, child-oriented lifestyle) note: only score this for pedophiles with at least one victim age 13 or less, victims who were age 14 at time of assault regardless of mental age are not counted.**

0 = no obvious identification with children

1 = immature relationships with adults, some interest in child-oriented activities, sees children as having special qualities to understand or communicate with them

2 = obviously feels more comfortable with children than adults, no adult friends, strong child-oriented interests or pastimes

**4. Hostility toward women. (prejudice against women, puts women into a different class unworthy of trust or respect, unable to form warm/constructive relationships with women, endorses sexist attitudes, relationships with women are adversarial or conflicted)**

0 = comfortable with women, has female friends he is not sexually interested in, no female friends but no conflicts

1 = some conflicts with more than one woman in more than one environment (treatment, work, family, neighborhood)

2 = frequent conflicts with women (doesn't believe males and females can be just friends, believes women are only good for sex, believes women can't be trusted, consistently dismissive of women's opinions)

**5. General social rejection/loneliness. (is core member able to make friends and feel close to others, is he lonely and prone to feelings of social rejection, is his emotionally close to family and friends, what is his impression of the world)**

- 0 = generally well integrated socially considering the social upheaval of being convicted of a sexual offense
- 1 = some weak connections to others, some short-term causal relationships to others but no long-term friends, no close relationships with others but doesn't not feel lonely or rejected, the 'loner'.
- 2 = frequently feels lonely or rejected, no social supports, poor skills in attracting and maintaining close relationships

**6. Lack of concern for others. (little consideration for the feelings of others, acts according to own self interest, fakes or shallow displays of regret, has little or no remorse, demonstrates ruthlessness or indifference towards their victims AND their friends and family, may have friend/acquaintances but no stable or caring relationships, significant pathology must be present, this is fairly unusual) note: not merely a lack of concern towards victims**

- 0 = generally emotionally responsive and caring but may be callous/indifferent to some people he dislikes
- 1 = significantly callous/indifferent in at least one context – victims, business, neighbors but shows warmth and caring in some close relationships
- 2 = typically shows little remorse or concern for others, most interactions are utilitarian with little warmth or attachment to others.

**7. Sex drive/preoccupation. (recurrent sexual thoughts and behaviour not directed towards romantic partner, will have casual sex, sex interferes with other pro-social goals, sexual thoughts and behaviours are perceived as excessive by the core member. Masturbates more than 15 times a month, regular use of sex workers, large amount of time spent in sex-oriented use of internet, large pornography collection, history of 30 + sexual partners, disturbing sexual thoughts)**

- 0 = no evidence of impersonal sex or sexual preoccupations
- 1 = some evidence of impersonal sex, regular use of pornography for sexual gratification, some sexual preoccupation
- 2 = clear evidence of any sexual preoccupations or some evidence of multiple preoccupations

**8. Sex as coping. (Life stress and negative emotions trigger sexual thoughts or behaviours, sexual content may be normal or deviant, sexual coping seen in multiple life domains related to stressors in work, family, interpersonal, uses sexual expression to dissipate anger, humiliation or frustration)**

- 0 = no history of using sex to cope with stress or in past year has had major stressor without using sex to cope
- 1 = occasional lapses into sexual fantasies or behaviours when stressed but not the typical reaction, has other coping skills
- 2 = negative emotions or life events typically invoke sexual thoughts or behaviours

**9. Deviant sexual interests. (sexual interest in people, objects or activities that are illegal, inappropriate or highly unusual, such as children, non-consenting adults, voyeurism, exhibitionism, cross-dressing, coprophilia, fetishism, etc. Consider both the frequency and the unusualness of the behaviour. The highest score of any of the four sections is the score for the entire section. This area is the single most important factor to determine re-offending behaviours)**

1. Number of Sexual Offense victims (0 = one victim, 1 = 2 to 7 victims, 2 = 8+ victims)
2. Number of Deviant Preferences victims/activities (0 = None, 1 = one deviant victim/activity, 2 = two plus)

3. Self report of Deviant Fantasies or Preferences (0 = endorse only normal, 1 = you suspect deviant fantasies or preferences, 2 = core member describes or admits to deviant fantasies or preferences)
4. Results of specialized testing (No score if no testing info, 0 = testing results show deviant preference, 1 = mixed results of possible deviance, 2 = deviant preference shown in testing and nothing done about it)
5. "In Remission" can be added if core member is in an age appropriate, consensual, satisfying sexual relationship of at least one year while in the community for the past two years but relationship must be independently confirmed.

**10. Cooperation with supervision. (is core member working with supervisor or against supervisor [if one exists—Circle direction, if one does not], does core member believe himself to be at no risk for reoffending but places himself in high risk situations, does he take the conditions of supervision/covenant seriously. Is he disengaged and just going through the motions of treatment/CoSA. Is he manipulative trying to play the system by being 'buddy-buddy' with supervisor while lying and splitting treatment staff/Circle members. Is he asking for special favours. Is he showing up to appointments late or at the wrong times or not at all?)**

0 = core member appears to be working with supervisor/Circle, regular attendance, follows through on instructions

1 = some problems but generally cooperative, some missed appointments

2 = supervisor perceives the core member as being uncooperative, deceptive, manipulative or disengaged, late to appointments or not having the sense of knowing what is going on with him in the community

**11. Impulse control. (easily swayed by opportunistic circumstances, behaviour has a high likelihood of negative consequences, easily bored so he seeks thrills and has little regard for safety, impulsive across several settings not just in sexual offending history) Examples: substance abuse, reckless driving, accepting bets and dares, quitting a job without a plan for another, changing residences, unsafe work and recreation practices, starting fights with bigger men**

0 = no problems or only limited to sexual misbehaviour

1 = occasional impulsive behaviour, repeated high risk behaviours in only one area (only substance use or only fighting)

2 = frequent impulsive behaviour in more than one setting beyond their sexual offending

**12. Cognitive problem solving skills. (difficulty in identifying problems and solving problems, proposes unrealistic solutions, always takes the quickest and easiest way out rather than considering other options, lacks long-range plans, fails to recognize the consequences of behaviours)**

0 = able to appropriately identify and address typical life problems

1 = some poorly considered decisions, but open to correction when difficulties are pointed out

2 = frequently makes poor decisions, fails to identify obvious life problems, difficulty generating workable alternatives, difficulties recognizing negative consequences even when pointed out

**13. Negative emotionality/hostility. (grievance thinking in general and response to real grievances are excessive, holds grudges, tends to feel victimized and resentful, ruminates on past wrongs, explosive emotional reactions, dismisses possible solutions by others)**

## Conclusion

- 0 = occasional expressions of grievances, but not excessive based on core member's life situation
- 1 = some hostility or resentment beyond what would be reasonably expected, core member appears to cope constructively, can move beyond problem
- 2 = clings to resentments and ruminates on small setbacks, tends to give up easily and indulges in self-pity, chronic suspiciousness and irrational feelings of persecution

**14. Victim access. (Attempts to call, send letters or messages through others to past victims, attempts to meet with inappropriate visitors)**

- 0 = no problem
- 1 = incidental contact, not repeated/unavoidable but regular incidental contact, no indication of victim approach
- 2 = repeated opportunity, hints of planning, of several choices he mostly/always chooses the most risky one

**15. Substance abuse. (Any use of contraband – cigarettes, drugs, alcohol, inhalants, using pills prescribed to another, willing to go into 'debt' to obtain substances from others)**

- 0 = no use
- 1 = some use but not problematic and not prohibited (e.g., occasion drink at bar with friends)
- 2 = problem use, any prohibited use (use considered a probation/810 violation)

## Appendix G: Recidivism and Economic Analysis Tables

Table 5: Observed CoSA Recidivism Rates (%)

		<b>3 year rate</b>	<b>5 year rate</b>	<b>10 year rate</b>
WED	Sexual	3.23	5.28	9.80
	Non-Sexual	3.20	3.20	6.42
LTSO	Sexual	0.00	11.10	11.10
	Non-Sexual	2.27	2.27	2.27
Overall	Sexual	2.0	5.6	9.5
	Non-Sexual	2.9	2.9	5.5

Table 6: Breaches and Re-Offenses according to original victim type

<b>Victim Type</b>	<b>Breaches</b>	<b>Re-Offence (charge)</b>	<b>Re-Offence (charged and convicted)</b>
Male <13	27.4%	12.5%	33.3%
Female <13	22.1%	25.0%	33.3%
Male 14-18	9.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Female 14-18	15.8	50.0%	16.6%
Male 19+	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Female 19+	23.1%	12.5%	16.6%

Table 7: Breaches and Re-Offence according to repeat status

	<b>Breaches</b>	<b>Re-Offence (charge)</b>	<b>Re-Offence (charged and convicted)</b>
Repeat Offender	61.3%	77.8%	50.0%
First time Offender	38.7%	22.2%	50.0%

Table 8: Baseline Rates of Recidivism from Literature

<b>Researchers</b>	<b>Recidivism Type</b>	<b>Follow Up Period</b>	<b>Recidivism Rate</b>
Wilson, Cortoni, & McWhinnie (2009)	Sexual Recidivism	3 Years	27.78%
Hanson, Harris, Helmus & Thornton (2014)	Sexual Recidivism	5 years	22.0%
	Sexual Recidivism	10 years	28.8%

Table 9: Percentage Reduction in Sexual Recidivism (%)

		<b>3 year rate</b>	<b>5 year rate</b>	<b>10 year rate</b>
WED	Sexual	88.4	76.0	66.0
LTSO	Sexual	100.0	49.5	61.5
Overall	Sexual	92.8	74.5	67.0

The formula used to determine the reduction = Baseline rate-CoSA rate/Baseline rate) x100.

Table 11: Values used to determine CoSA's cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit between May 2008 and May 2014

	<b>5 Year Fixed Period (5/2008 – 5/2014)</b>			
	Sexual Recidivism Rate	Theoretical Events Prevented	Cost-Effectiveness Ratio	Cost Benefit Ratio
WED/810	7.5%	292.8	43,358.9	5.6
LTSO	25%	n/a*	n/a*	n/a*
Overall	10.13%	240.43	52,806.6	4.6

\*Calculations could not be complete as the LTSO recidivism rate of 25% is higher than the baseline Hanson et al. (2014) rate of 22%. However, this rate is only based on 4 individuals who survived for five years.

Appendix H: Kaplan Meier Tables

The following three tables were used to calculate the five-year fixed recidivism rates (between May 2008 and May 2014) used in the cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis.

Table 12: WED 5-year sexual recidivism rates.

WED Sexual Recidivism Rates									
Month	Time Period	# at risk	# Censored	# Offended	#Offence-free	Proportion Offence-free	Proportion Offended	Survival Probability	Cumulative Incidence
0-12	Year 1	84	30	2	82	0.976190476	0.023809524	0.976190476	0.023809524
12-24	Year 2	52	19	0	52	1	0	0.976190476	0.023809524
24-36	Year 3	33	14	0	33	1	0	0.976190476	0.023809524
36-48	Year 4	19	5	1	18	0.947368421	0.052631579	0.92481203	0.07518797
48-60	Year 5	13	6	0	13	1	0	0.92481203	0.07518797
60-72	Year 6	7	7	0	7	1	0	0.92481203	0.07518797
72-84	Year 7	0			0				#DIV/0!
84-96	Year 8	0			0				#DIV/0!
96-108	Year 9	0			0				#DIV/0!
108-120	Year 10	0			0				#DIV/0!

Table 13: LTSO 5-year sexual recidivism rates.

LTSO Sexual Recidivism Rates									
Month	Time Period	# at risk	# Censored	# Offended	#Offence-free	Proportion Offence-free	Proportion Offended	Survival Probability	Cumulative Incidence
0-12	Year 1	66	28	0	66	1	0	1	0
12-24	Year 2	38	15	0	38	1	0	1	0
24-36	Year 3	23	11	0	23	1	0	1	0
36-48	Year 4	12	8	0	12	1	0	1	0
48-60	Year 5	4	2	1	3	0.75	0.25	0.75	0.25
60-72	Year 6	1	1	0	1	1	0	0.75	0.25
72-84	Year 7	0			0				
84-96	Year 8	0			0				
96-108	Year 9	0			0				
108-120	Year 10	0			0				



Table 14: Overall 5-year sexual recidivism rates.

**Overall Sexual Recidivism Rates**

Month	Time Period	# at risk	# Censored	# Offended	#Offence-Free	Proportion Offence-free	Proportion Offended	Survival Probability	Cumulative Incidence
0-12	Year 1	150	58	2	148	0.986666667	0.013333333	0.986666667	0.013333333
12-24	Year 2	90	34	0	90	1	0	0.986666667	0.013333333
24-36	Year 3	56	25	0	56	1	0	0.986666667	0.013333333
36-48	Year 4	31	13	1	30	0.967741935	0.032258065	0.95483871	0.04516129
48-60	Year 5	17	8	1	16	0.941176471	0.058823529	0.898671727	0.101328273
60-72	Year 6	8	8	0	8	1	0	0.898671727	0.101328273
72-84	Year 7	0			0				
84-96	Year 8	0			0				
96-108	Year 9	0			0				
108-120	Year 10	0			0				

The following six tables were used to determine the recidivism rates used in the survival analysis. The evaluation only reported the sexual recidivism rate, however, here we have included both sexual and non-sexual rates of recidivism.

Table 15: WED 10-year sexual and non-sexual recidivism rates.

**WED Sexual Recidivism Rates**

Month	Time Period	# at risk	# Censored	# Offended	#Offence-Free	Proportion Offence-free	Proportion Offended	Survival Probability	Cumulative Incidence
0-12	Year 1	124	38	4	120	0.967741935	0.032258065	0.967741935	0.032258065
12-24	Year 2	82	20	0	82	1	0	0.967741935	0.032258065
24-36	Year 3	62	15	0	62	1	0	0.967741935	0.032258065
36-48	Year 4	47	6	1	46	0.978723404	0.021276596	0.947151682	0.052848318
48-60	Year 5	40	10	0	40	1	0	0.947151682	0.052848318
60-72	Year 6	30	9	0	30	1	0	0.947151682	0.052848318
72-84	Year 7	21	4	1	20	0.952380952	0.047619048	0.902049221	0.097950779
84-96	Year 8	16	4	0	16	1	0	0.902049221	0.097950779
96-108	Year 9	12	4	0	12	1	0	0.902049221	0.097950779
108-120	Year 10	8	0	0	8	1	0	0.902049221	0.097950779

WED Non-Sexual Recidivism Rates

Month	Time Period	# at risk	# Censored	# Offended	#Offense-Free	Proportion Offense-free	Proportion Offended	Survival Probability	Cumulative Incidence
0-12	Year 1	124	40	2	122	0.983870968	0.016129032	0.983870968	0.016129032
12-24	Year 2	82	20	0	82	1	0	0.983870968	0.016129032
24-36	Year 3	62	14	1	61	0.983870968	0.016129032	0.968002081	0.031997919
36-48	Year 4	47	7	0	47	1	0	0.968002081	0.031997919
48-60	Year 5	40	10	0	40	1	0	0.968002081	0.031997919
60-72	Year 6	30	8	1	29	0.966666667	0.033333333	0.935735345	0.064264655
72-84	Year 7	21	5	0	21	1	0	0.935735345	0.064264655
84-96	Year 8	16	4	0	16	1	0	0.935735345	0.064264655
96-108	Year 9	12	4	0	12	1	0	0.935735345	0.064264655
108-120	Year 10	8	0	0	8	1	0	0.935735345	0.064264655

Table 16: LTSO 10-year sexual and non-sexual recidivism rates.

LTSO Sexual Recidivism Rates

Month	Time Period	# at risk	# Censored	# Offended	#Offense-Free	Proportion Offense-free	Proportion Offended	Survival Probability	Cumulative Incidence
0-12	Year 1	72	28	0	72	1	0	1	0
12-24	Year 2	44	15	0	44	1	0	1	0
24-36	Year 3	29	13	0	29	1	0	1	0
36-48	Year 4	16	7	0	16	1	0	1	0
48-60	Year 5	9	1	1	8	0.888888889	0.111111111	0.888888889	0.111111111
60-72	Year 6	7	4	0	7	1	0	0.888888889	0.111111111
72-84	Year 7	3	1	0	3	1	0	0.888888889	0.111111111
84-96	Year 8	2	0	0	2	1	0	0.888888889	0.111111111
96-108	Year 9	2	0	0	2	1	0	0.888888889	0.111111111
108-120	Year 10	2	0	0	2	1	0	0.888888889	0.111111111

### LTSO Non-Sexual Recidivism Rates

Month	Time Period	# at risk	# Censored	# Offended	#Offense-Free	Proportion Offense-free	Proportion Offended	Survival Probability	Cumulative Incidence
0-12	Year 1	72	28	0	72	1	0	1	0
12-24	Year 2	44	14	1	43	0.977272727	0.022727273	0.977272727	0.022727273
24-36	Year 3	29	13	0	29	1	0	0.977272727	0.022727273
36-48	Year 4	16	7	0	16	1	0	0.977272727	0.022727273
48-60	Year 5	9	2	0	9	1	0	0.977272727	0.022727273
60-72	Year 6	7	4	0	7	1	0	0.977272727	0.022727273
72-84	Year 7	3	1	0	3	1	0	0.977272727	0.022727273
84-96	Year 8	2	0	0	2	1	0	0.977272727	0.022727273
96-108	Year 9	2	0	0	2	1	0	0.977272727	0.022727273
108-120	Year 10	2	0	0	2	1	0	0.977272727	0.022727273

Table 17: Overall 10-year sexual and non-sexual recidivism rates.

### Overall Sexual Recidivism Rates

Month	Time Period	# at risk	# Censored	# Offended	#Offense-Free	Proportion Offense-free	Proportion Offended	Survival Probability	Cumulative Incidence
0-12	Year 1	196	66	4	192	0.979591837	0.020408163	0.979591837	0.020408163
12-24	Year 2	126	35	0	126	1	0	0.979591837	0.020408163
24-36	Year 3	91	28	0	91	1	0	0.979591837	0.020408163
36-48	Year 4	63	13	1	62	0.984126984	0.015873016	0.96404276	0.03595724
48-60	Year 5	49	11	1	48	0.979591837	0.020408163	0.944368418	0.055631582
60-72	Year 6	37	13	0	37	1	0	0.944368418	0.055631582
72-84	Year 7	24	5	1	23	0.958333333	0.041666667	0.905019734	0.094980266
84-96	Year 8	18	4	0	18	1	0	0.905019734	0.094980266
96-108	Year 9	14	4	0	14	1	0	0.905019734	0.094980266
108-120	Year 10	10	0	0	10	1	0	0.905019734	0.094980266

Overall Non-Sexual Recidivism Rates

Month	Time Period	# at risk	# Censored	# Offended	#Offence-Free	Proportion Offence-free	Proportion Offended	Survival Probability	Cumulative Incidence
0-12	Year 1	196	68	2	194	0.989795918	0.010204082	0.989795918	0.010204082
12-24	Year 2	126	34	1	125	0.992063492	0.007936508	0.981940395	0.018059605
24-36	Year 3	91	27	1	90	0.989010989	0.010989011	0.971149841	0.028850159
36-48	Year 4	63	14	0	63	1	0	0.971149841	0.028850159
48-60	Year 5	49	12	0	49	1	0	0.971149841	0.028850159
60-72	Year 6	37	12	1	36	0.972972973	0.027027027	0.944902548	0.055097452
72-84	Year 7	24	6	0	24	1	0	0.944902548	0.055097452
84-96	Year 8	18	4	0	18	1	0	0.944902548	0.055097452
96-108	Year 9	14	4	0	14	1	0	0.944902548	0.055097452
108-120	Year 10	10	0	0	10	1	0	0.944902548	0.055097452

# Site Case Studies

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*An eye for an eye will make the whole world blind.*

- Mahatma Gandhi



# SITE CASE STUDY: MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE ONTARIO

*When you come out of prison, I found that I don't belong anywhere. I don't belong in the city that I used to live in. I don't belong in this city where I moved. I don't belong anywhere. My friends are all gone, you have no more friends, and so Circles of Support is kind of like that anchor that you can hold on to. They're people that you know, they're people that you can get on the phone and contact. And I can't stress how important that is when you feel alone. And you really have to be in that position to understand what I mean when I say you feel alone.*

- CoSA Core Member

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

The case study of the Mennonite Central Committee Ontario (MCCO) is part of the mixed methods evaluation of the national demonstration project of Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA). As a community-based initiative, CoSA is very much defined by local interests and needs, resulting in significant variation across the 14 demonstration sites. With this case study, we would like to provide a rich description of the site, its history and evolution, how it functions, its challenges and its many accomplishments. Embedded in this case study are the stories of five – 11 core members, each providing insight into their experiences with the program, as well as their day-to-day challenges and successes. The case study also includes the voices of the circles volunteers gathered through one-on-one interviews and volunteer journals collected over a one year period. Interviews with site coordinators adds to our further understanding of this CoSA site.

### Methods

The MCCO CoSA site was selected as one of four

initial sites to be part of a comparative case study to provide a rich description of each case and to illustrate variation across program contexts. Data was collected through multiple sources of information in order to provide selected perspectives on phenomena occurring at the site, and to enable triangulation of methods and sources to reduce bias and help with gaining a broader understanding of issues.

**Documentation** included quarterly indicator reports, job descriptions, site protocols, training materials and other material considered relevant to our understanding of the site. This material was used to ground our qualitative data and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the site during the duration of the demonstration project.

**Interviews** were conducted with one site coordinator, six circle volunteers, and 11 core members. The first formal interview was with the lead site coordinator, Eileen Henderson in February 2013, and was conducted over the telephone. A site visit in early July 2013 provided the opportunity for multiple conversations with site personnel in Toronto and in Hamilton, Ontario. During the site visit, in-person interviews were also conducted with 11 core members. These interviews were approximately 30-50 minutes in length, and were audio-taped and subsequently transcribed. Follow-up interviews were conducted with five of the 11 core members in February 2014. These interviews were conducted over the telephone and were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. Interviews with circle volunteers occurred over the telephone in July 2013 and were also audio-taped and transcribed verbatim.

**Volunteer journals** were kept by circle volunteers and included a description of circle activities, conversations, progress, challenges and feelings about how the circle was going. These journals were sent to us in September 2013 and May 2014 in the form of handwritten notes or computer word files.

## **Role of the Researcher**

My role in this case study was mainly that of an observer, data collector, and analyst. I have listened to the accounts of the Site Coordinator, Circle Coordinator, Circle Volunteers, and Core Members, and have asked questions to gain a better understanding of the functioning of this site and CoSA across the country. I have attempted to distill and express my knowledge, interpretation, observations, and insight through this case study. The sum of my role is in this case study and in the final evaluation.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

### **Site Overview: Location, Staff and Volunteers**

The MCCO site covers a large geographic area that includes three main areas: Toronto, Hamilton, and Kitchener, including a few add-ons such as London, Ontario. Given the size of the site, there are staff in Hamilton, Toronto and Kitchener who do many of the day-to-day activities, with a site coordinator who travels from site to site and who oversees the overall management of the site. To address the challenges of such a large site, there are staff located in each region, for a total of seven across the entire site. To create a sense of community across the site, they create opportunities for joint activities so that they can all get to know each other.

The MCCO site had 37 core members pre-demonstration project, and an additional 48 core members recruited during the course of the project. There are currently 324 active volunteers, up from 189 in year two of the project (32% are 21-25 years of age, 32% are 35-59, and 38% are 60+).

### **Governance**

This site is housed and governed by an MCCO Board of Directors, with an Ontario Board composed of an Executive Director and a Program Director, who has a reporting relationship with this CoSA site. The Executive Director reports

directly to the board. For the day-to-day running of the organization, they have a leadership team that is comprised of the Executive Director, the Program Director, the Associate Executive Director, and as needed the resource generator (fund raiser). Under the leadership team is the Performance Monitoring Evaluation and Reporting team and additionally, a program team that tends to focus on local Ontario programs, of which circles in one.

Their relationship with MCC has helped them weather budget cuts (through bridge funding), and has provided them with the advantages of a larger organization in terms of promotional and funding activity. Their relationship has also meant that they use broader criteria in which to recruit core members.

### **Site Operations**

**Core members.** While they never have difficulty recruiting core members as they maintain good relationships with high risk police and they meet regularly with local community groups, maintaining a steady stream of new core members is an ongoing challenge. Many core members are recruited from inside institutions, either through self-referrals or through parole officers. For the past four years, in Hamilton most of the referrals have come from parole officers at the Hamilton Community Correctional Centre, and mostly for residents on LTSO. In Kitchener, there are specific challenges that they are working on in terms of working with core members upon their release, as the local police don't want the sex offender around because of their high risk status.

MCCO also has a fairly broad selection criteria for CMs as they must also accommodate the needs of other funders. As a result, when churches contact them they need to be able to connect with people who do not necessarily meet all of the NCPC criteria. Their selection criteria is broader so that they can satisfy MCC's mandate as well as the mandate of private funders. When they started working with sex offenders nineteen years



ago, they only considered core members who were WED, whereas now they still include WED but also LTSO as well as provincial offenders who have moved under federal jurisdiction with LTSO. The inclusion of LTSO offenders adds a further logistical challenge, as these core members are more likely to breach their release conditions than WED offenders, often being sent back to prison for simple violations, and often being released into a different community. A further challenge with LTSO is that because there are three locations in Ontario under MCCO, residents are limited by choice of location, but may also be moved to the location where there is an available room, and in many cases moved to a different location after a breach.

**Circle volunteers.** The recruitment and retention of volunteers continues to be a challenge. While recruitment is usually done through word of mouth, they do have a short and long term strategy to guide them. They partner with the community chaplaincy in Toronto and work towards building relationships with potential volunteers through engagement in evening events, letting people get to know the program at their own pace. Short term, they do visit the volunteer bureau (although not one volunteer has been identified through this means), meeting people, speaking engagements and joining up with different MCC program areas.

There are also some challenges in terms of volunteer retention, and they are always looking for new ways to support and enhance volunteer experiences. They also feel that while they are always discussing potential training opportunities, they nonetheless feel that they could always do it better. Approximately two-thirds of volunteers will do the initial training, with some attending follow up training specific to the needs of the individual core member and circle. They have noted that it is difficult to get volunteers to attend ongoing training as it is difficult to schedule training at a time when volunteers are available. They also partner with community chaplaincy to offer

training. While Eileen is satisfied with the training that they do offer, she would like to provide more. As she says, she would like to provide enough so that volunteers feel comfortable, but not too much so that they feel over confident.

**Community partners.** They work hard at developing and maintaining strong relationships with community service providers, but they are always looking to identify new ones so that they don't burn out the ones that they already have. Connections and relationships with service providers vary depending upon the needs of the core members. For example, they meet with the high risk police on a regular basis, and depending upon different jurisdictions, they have different expectations of each other. They also maintain a partnership with local shelters, Ontario Works people, the John Howard Society, and law enforcement providers such as police, probation, parole, therapists, etc. One of their challenges is finding the balance between not being seen as part of the system and at the same time, working within the system as advocates for core members.

## Circles

A circle is defined by a group of volunteers (approximately four), including a staff person, who meet with a core member on a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly basis, depending upon the core members needs. Initially, circle meetings tend to be more frequent, as attention is focused on helping the core member adjust to their release conditions and to life outside of prison, find a suitable place to live, identify potential sources of employment/resources and locate needed community services. As one of the core members explained, *"when I first came to Toronto I was a real mess because of death threats and [my circle] really helped me immensely learn how to live life out in society after so many years in prison"*.

For many core members, once their basic needs have been met and they become better adept at managing and understanding their release conditions (or restrictions are lifted altogether),

the circle meetings become less frequent and meetings turn into what many core members describe as “friendship”. As one of the core members described, “*I expect to keep my circle going after my 810. They’ve really become friends now, valued friends*”. Other core members, however, will never fully adjust to life outside of prison and never fully integrate into society, and as such will always require an active circle that meets on a regular basis. For many of these core members, the circle becomes their “lifeline”. As a core member who has been a part of CoSA for over eight years explains:

*I got to drop you in the middle of Iran and say good bye. Now you got to go and live. You can’t, because you’ll run into a bunch of stumbling blocks. But if you turn around and put five people there to help you, they’re whatever country but they all speak the same language and everything else, but you don’t speak that language. Me, I have a jailhouse attitude. My language isn’t nice and clean all the time. Do you know what I mean? So here I have a circle around me, and that’s what they mean by a circle. They watch me and keep me out of trouble. I get myself in trouble just by being me.*

For many of the core members interviewed, the circle not only provides the support that they require to adjust to life outside of prison, it also represents friendship in what is otherwise a very lonely and solitary existence. As one of the core members explains, “*it’s like having a friend when you really, really feel so alone*”. For others who have been in and out of prison for most of their adult lives, the circle represents an opportunity for them to change their lives. As circle members describe:

*Unfortunately I’ve got a lengthy record, okay? The times I came out and I didn’t have no support. And I know when you have no support it’s dangerous and I needed someone to talk to. I needed someone because the circle, they’ll listen to you, they get to know you, they get to know you on a personal basis. And if you got something bugging you, you can get it off your chest.*

*I know that when you have issues and you don’t deal with them, I know they can-like a volcano, it rumbles-but if you have a couple people that you actually feel comfortable enough that you can open up and tell them “listen, this is what is going on in my head”. It’s like taking a building off your shoulders. It’s a release. It’s a peace of mind, that’s what it is. Something I didn’t have a lot of and I’ve had problems with it pretty well 25 years of my life. You know, I’ve had this for, since I was 25. It’s a long, long process and it’s hard to change 25 years of negativity.*

While formal circle meetings (often held in coffee shops or the MCC office) do not necessarily follow any pre-set pattern, most usually begin with an update on how everyone is doing, a friendly exchange between circle volunteers and the core member. As one of the circle volunteers explains

*Pretty much we usually start with going around and asking how everybody’s doing. And we ask [core members], “so how are you doing?” Or “what’s been new since the last time that we spoke?” It might seem like a little question but it fills the entire time because there’s always issues that the core member is experiencing. There’s always new things that come up...*

As another volunteers describes, “*we discuss everything under the sun. It’s an opportunity for the person to talk and mention his issues that he has, his worries and concerns*”. This exchange also provides positive role modeling for core members to experience positive social interactions. According to one of the circle volunteers:

*One nice thing about the exchange of how your day, how your week has gone is that the guys see from us what real life is like. Because they’re coming from a really strange life, and we can illustrate how our weeks are going and it gives them an idea of what life should be like.*

The composition of the circle is based on a combination of interest, age range and experience between circle volunteers and core

members. There is always a staff person involved in each circle as well, a practice that ultimately provides additional support to circle volunteers and ensures continuity if/when there are changes among volunteers on the circle.

Circle volunteers also provide support and friendship outside of formal circle meetings, by getting together for recreational activities, coffee, and volunteer jobs. Core members describe trips to the YMCA, gardening activities, movies, dinner, and birthday celebrations. According to core members, circle volunteers “*are fully involved in my life and they are going to stay that way*”. Another core member says, “*for me, they’re an extension of family*”. Another added that “*when a special time comes, you don’t feel so ...you don’t feel so down*”.

## EVOLUTION OF SITE

The history of this site is really the history of CoSA in Canada. The relationship with Charlie Taylor, a low functioning, high risk, repeat child sexual abuser who eventually became the first core member, dates back to the early 1980s, when he was first released to Toronto after completing his sentence in a federal penitentiary. The “circle concept” was created when a group of people, who were part of an intentional community, befriended Charlie. While some of these people ultimately became part of Charlie’s new “circle”, the “circles” concept only became applied as “Circles of Support and Accountability” after Charlie was released to Hamilton in June 1994. In response to the Charlie’s need for assistance, a Mennonite pastor by the name of Harry Nigh gathered a small group of congregants to offer both humane support and a realistic accountability framework based on the principles of restorative justice. A few months later there was a similar intervention with another offender, this time by the Reverend Hugh Kirkegaard, in a neighbouring community. A few months later, with assistance from MCCO, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) sponsored a pilot project called the Community Reintegration Project to explore whether this approach to community reintegration could be

operationalized and more broadly implemented, ultimately leading to the birth of Circles of Support and Accountability across Canada.

The evaluation of the pilot project in South-Central Ontario in 2005 consisted of two combined studies, 1) a survey looking at the experiences of all key stakeholder (core members (n=24), volunteers (n=57), professionals (n=16) and the broader community (n=77)), and 2) an examination of the impact of CoSA on recidivism, both of which were overwhelmingly positive (see Wilson, Picheca & Prinzo, 2005).

Since the initial pilot project, this site has continued to receive funding from CSC, enabling them to evolve and change over time, most recently adding Dismas Fellowship, Creative Exchange and other support groups to extend the work of CoSA. While these groups are considered offshoots rather than components of CoSA, they are nonetheless important in complementing circles work. They also function differently in the three sites. In Toronto, for instance, Dismas Fellowship is offered in partnership with two other organizations and is open to ex-prisoners not engaged with CoSA. In Hamilton, Dismas is more closely linked with the CoSA program and has served as a key bridge for core members (many who are LTSO) while they wait for a circle. In Kitchener, the fellowship goes by another name. Overall, these groups have not only served as a bridge to individual “circles”, but have enabled the MCC to go beyond the support and accountability of CoSA. Given the challenge of finding pro-social activities for core members, these groups have now become an important part of the ecosystem of CoSA.

## SITE FEATURES

Community orientation and focus. MCC is a large site spreading over a wide metropolitan area that encompasses Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener (and London), with a team of seven staff working on CoSAs across these multiple locations. The site coordinator devotes a significant amount of time on her telephone and in the car

travelling from location to location to ensure that everything is running smoothly, to address issues/potential issues and to stay connected with the staff, volunteers, core members and service providers. Thus, despite the geographic spread of this site, there is a strong sense of community that prevails, holding all of the communities together. As the site coordinator has explained, despite community differences, this site has a team of people who work together to help foster a strong feeling of community connection among colleagues, volunteers and others involved in the work of CoSA.

This strong sense of community is further nurtured and sustained by regular and ongoing community activities that include bi-monthly fellowship meetings, an annual celebration day where everyone is invited, Christmas and Thanksgiving celebrations, an annual weekend retreat and a monthly get together for those who want to share their creative outlets. For core members who have very little to no contact with family or friends, these opportunities for socializing provide a break from what for many is a difficult and challenging adjustment to day-to-day life. As one of the core members explained, “*if it wasn’t for CoSA I’d be sitting around twiddling my thumbs for pretty much the entire day, and that’s not a healthy environment*”. In the words of another core member, “*if I’m not*

*When I first came to Dismas I wouldn’t say anything. I’m a very quiet person and I observe a lot. It takes a while for me to feel like I trust others. Since I was at Dismas for probably a year, I realize that people weren’t there to try to put me down or punish me, they were there for support if I was capable of showing them a good attitude.*

*(Core Member)*

*busy I end up as we say in the Pen and the programs, stinking thinking. You start thinking negative and once you start thinking negative you start thinking about it all the time”.*

**D i s m a s  
F e l l o w s h i p**  
was started by

a group of people who were active in chapel activities in prison and who could not find a place

to engage in these activities outside of prison life. Collectively they began to dream about a Friday evening group where volunteers and core members could meet on a regular basis, cook a meal and share in an evening of songs, stories and socializing. For the MCC site, Dismas offers a way to build support over time rather than putting core members on waiting lists. As one of the site coordinators explained, we tell potential core members “*come to [Dismas], understand the rules and the values, and then we’ll start to build supports from there*”. All of the core members and circle volunteers interviewed spoke very favourably about Dismas, describing their positive experiences with the program. As one circle volunteer explained, “*it’s very connected. I find things out about core members that only get shared in that sort of atmosphere. It’s a very companionable atmosphere, very trusting, very considerate of each other*”.

In 2010, one MCC site, spearheaded by one of the core members, started “Creative Exchange”, a program where approximately 15-18 core members get together once a month to share music, poetry, writing, etc. As one of the core members who has now written over 50 poems explained:

*If it wasn’t for Dismas I wouldn’t be here at all. I wouldn’t have progressed that far in trust and degree of risk. The more trust you crave, the more your risk is diminished.*  
*(Core Member)*

*It’s given me an avenue to vent in a healthy environment instead of an unhealthy environment. I know that I can write things, some of it’s not really for the group but I can share with members of my team so that they can listen to the poetry...some of my poetry is very angry and other poetry is very excited and happy...*

Despite the size of the MSS CoSA site, there is nonetheless a very strong CoSA community at this site. The circle extends far beyond the boundaries of the individual dynamics between

circle volunteers and core members (what may be considered the traditional ‘circle’), embracing the CoSA community as a whole. All of these program opportunities outside of formal circles, provide core members with occasions for socializing and getting together with “friends and family”, for ‘creative exchange’, for sharing a meal or for participating in what for many, are considered normal activities. As one of the core members expressed about Dismas, *“we all pitch in together like one big family, that’s the way it is”*.

**Evolution of circle.** As noted, the MCC CoSA site is very much founded on a community-based approach, one where circle volunteers and core members build relationships within the formal work of a circle, as well as informally through informal activities that take place outside of circles. So while circles shift and change, from regularly scheduled meetings (weekly, bi-weekly, etc.) to less frequent formal meetings, the circle itself rarely officially comes to an end. Instead, over time the circle evolves to accommodate the changing needs of the core member. In fact, of the eleven initial core members interviewed, the average time spent involved in a circle has been 7.5 years. Thus in terms of the closing of a circle, they have realized at this site that very few core members are ever able to fully integrate into the larger community as they lack essential pro-social skills, and with their prison records, often insurmountable challenges finding sustainable employment. So while circles do not end officially, the relationship between the volunteers and core member changes, with the possibility open for the resumption of a more formal circle should the core member need additional support. As one of the volunteers concluded, *“a lot of guys, they need that ongoing support even after all the conditions are done with, because they just don’t have a support system in their lives. Se we are their family, literally”*. According to one of the volunteers, *“the informal circle is just being there for*

*There’s a lot of things that put you down so it’s kind of hard to keep smiling. That’s where the circle comes in.*  
- Core Member

*guys. Someone can call and just say, “hey, how’s it going?” And sometimes they’re just so glad that you called”*.

Thus while there are still formal circles, at this site CoSA is considered more broadly as a set of relationships that take place between volunteers and core members. These relationships are developed and nurtured through informal activities (e.g., meals, recreational activities, volunteer activities) between core members and circle volunteers. As one core member relates, he goes to the Y once a week with one volunteer, meets another for coffee on a regular basis, and with another he works on her garden and helps with carpentry work. At the same time, there are numerous opportunities created throughout the year to celebrate these relationships (whether they are formally recognized in a circle or informally through Dismas and other such activities), through the celebration of core members commitment to the principles of CoSA (their anniversaries), birthdays, Christmas and Thanksgiving. As one of the core members expressed, *“getting together is like a big family reunion”*. Dismas meetings provide further opportunities to help create and foster relationships among all of the many CoSA stakeholders (volunteers, core members, service providers). For a number of core members, this community engagement on a bi-monthly basis provides them with all of the support and friendship that they require. As one of the core members explained, *“if it wasn’t for Dismas, I wouldn’t be here at all, I wouldn’t have progressed that far in trust and degree of risk”*.

**Mutually beneficial relationship.** A theme that was consistent throughout all of the interviews is the mutually beneficial relationship that is created between core members and circle volunteers. While it is easy to acknowledge how beneficial CoSA is in terms of helping core members integrate into society and in terms of protecting society as in ‘no more victims’, it is rarely acknowledged how much volunteers themselves also gain from their participation and experience in CoSA. As one of the circle volunteers expressed:

*Sometimes we think we're only doing it for somebody else and yet it's really also for me too... to see how they struggle when they come out... a lot of our guys are doing really well and yet to see how they struggle with... it's like watching them and how they look at the possibilities really, and that's just, that's really just inspiring for me.*

When asked how she would tell other people about CoSA, one of the volunteers explained

*I'd tell them that I grow. And that it's not all about me, but it is about me also... it's a way for me to feel that in some way I'm helping. That I'm really helping to make the community a safer place to live... so for me-and really it just helps me kind of, I don't know, walk in somebody else's shoes for a little while..it takes me out of my own stuff, my own little world, and it allows me to look at something larger than that.*

At the same time, core members are very appreciative of the relationships that they have with circle volunteers as they feel that they have people that they can really rely on to help them adjust to life outside prison, a particularly challenging task for sex offenders in our society. One of the core members interviewed expressed candidly that “they’ve helped me out in so many different ways that I felt compelled to do this interview”. According to another core member, “I’ve got their numbers and whenever I need someone to talk to I can pick up the phone and call them. They always answer”. For others, circle volunteers provide moral support, “like having a friend when you really, really feel alone”.

Interviews with circle volunteers and core members has really highlighted that circles provide a level of support, commitment and friendship that many core members have never experienced, as many come from dysfunctional families where they themselves were victims of sexual abuse, learning disabilities that prevented them from completing high school, and few employment prospects and opportunities available to develop pro social skills

(and build social and cultural capital). As one of the core members expressed, “every time I get a good mark in school, they praise me. They give me the encouragement that I never had as a child and it makes me feel good”.

*They're fully involved in my life and they're going to stay that way...just the encouragement that I get from the circle. I never got that when I was growing up; my parents used to put me down a lot. The circle group boosts my self esteem.*

*- Core Member*

One of the core member's sums it up well

*In the case of [circle volunteer], if you go over to her house you'll find she has a hosta heaven. Well. That's most of my work. So I get the pleasure of knowing I was able to help [her], and I get to see the smile in her eyes when she looks around her garden and it's almost just the way she wants it...*

## **SITE IMPACT**

In this section we talk about the impact that CoSA has had on core members, on circle volunteers and on the community. While we talk about each component separately, in practice the impact of CoSA extends beyond each individual part to encompass all three parts, very much as an interconnected whole. Work with core members thus has a ripple effect that involves volunteers and their experiences, ultimately benefitting society as a whole, not only in terms of safety, but in terms of building a sense of compassion and a greater sense of community.

## **Core Member Impact**

CoSA has had significant impact on core members in terms of helping them make the transition from life in prison to life in society, no matter what restrictions they may have had when first released. For many core members, CoSA provides the only support that they have, as the majority of core members have very little support from family or



friends. Thus while many core members need very hands on help navigating the conditions of their release, most also need help meeting some very basic needs, such as finding an affordable place to live, connections with services (e.g., community, employment, food), etc. Moreover, depending upon how much time the core member has spent incarcerated, the transition to life outside of prison can also be fraught with fear, anxiety

*I used to have a friend in prison and he used to say to me, "how long would it take me to adjust to the street because everything's changed?" And I used to say, "oh, a couple of days," and then eventually I said, "well, a week." Now I know the answer is never. I'll never really catch up. That 17 years is lost.*

- Core Member

and loneliness, and so (at least initially) much of the work of volunteers is spent easing the transition not only physically, but emotionally and psychologically as well. As one of the volunteers describes, "he

was pretty scared when he came out, I think the circle is a stable thing in what is probably, what is a little bit of a chaotic life. Just trying to find a place to live - he was in a shelter for a lot of weeks, and then for him just trying to get his life back". According to another volunteer, the core member "looked like a scared rabbit. He wouldn't talk. He just had that scared look on his face... because it's terrifying. They don't know anybody, they're in a strange community, and they're always looking over their shoulders worried the cops are going to arrest them". CoSA essentially provides what one core member describes as "a lifeline".

At a fundamental level, what CoSA offers core members is friendship, a connection with other human beings and with the opportunity to talk about things that they would not be able to talk to with others. As one of the circle volunteers explains

*I've heard core members say, you are my family, because they don't have a family, or their family has rejected them and they have no contact with their family because they're considered a pariah not only by society but by their families as well.*

Providing core members with friendship is particularly important, as many core members trust few people within the broader criminal or mental health system. CoSA works in large part because circle volunteers are seen as standing outside of the system.

As a broad-based community program, CoSA at MCC provides support to core members beyond the boundaries of the circle. As such, they are able to provide help to core members outside of the traditional 'support and accountability' function of the circle. For one core member, this meant that his participation in Dismas gave him the opportunity to address some very fundamental childhood issues. As he relates:

*One night [the core member] was mugged and he was really, really distraught. And so he called me, I think first of all. And this was like at 10pm at night, and so I immediately met him. I went and sat on his bed as he sobbed for like an hour, and at the end he was really appreciative of the fact that someone was there for him.*

- Circle Volunteer

*I was in the middle of a conversation and two gentlemen were discussing their conditions about how they couldn't be around children, they couldn't be around playgrounds and stuff like that, and being that I'm a survivor of sexual abuse I found that very challenging at first...As I got to know these individuals better, these are the guys that I wish my abuser was more like. So that he could have said "I was wrong"...so I'm meeting people who are sorry for what they've done, and they're allowing me to rebuild a part of me that never had a chance to develop when I was growing up. It's allowing me to become more of a balanced person again.*

## Circle Volunteer Impact

As noted earlier, as a result of their involvement with CoSA, circle volunteers overwhelmingly identified personal learning and their acquisition of new knowledge about the criminal justice system. A number of volunteers also pointed out that their participation in CoSA has given them an understanding of how their work as volunteers ultimately makes society safer for everyone. As one volunteer describes:

*Well I had a pretty good upbringing, I had a pretty easy life, and as I grew older...I just realized I've got to start giving back because I've had it pretty good. So that was the first thing in my mind. I have to give back...and also because of my kids...I have two kids that I love a lot and I would never want anything bad to happen to them so I thought this is a way of kind of being...it's like a civic duty.*

According to another volunteer, “I have learned so much, and a lot I've learned from these guys. And I think it would benefit a lot of other mature adults to volunteer so that we can be better citizens in our country”. For others, there is a tremendous sense of personal growth, as well as the expression of a greater connection to the community and a sense of personal enrichment as a result of their volunteering with CoSA. As one of the volunteers explains:

*I think our lives, my life and the people who are part of the circles of support as volunteers, have been enriched immensely by a relationship with people who, most all of us are middle class, highly educated types, we wouldn't have that kind of experience. So it enriches our lives as much as it enriches others.*

## Community Impact

While we note the positive impact of CoSA on core members and on circle volunteers, we would be remiss if we did not also note the overall impact of CoSA on the community as a whole. In listening to the stories of core members and the experiences that volunteers recount about

the progress that many have made, there can be no doubt that the friendship and support offered ultimately leads to enhanced community safety. Without the support and accountability offered, the majority of these core members would be alone to make the transition from prison life back into the community, a transition that even with the support of volunteers, remains challenging. In the words of one core member:

*At first I was kind of secretive, I was manipulative...Because what I was doing was, I'm not supposed to associate with anyone under 16, and what happened was that I had bedbugs and I met somebody and as soon as she said she had grandchildren I was planning and scheming and I was doing all the nasty stuff I shouldn't be doing because that's my pattern, that's part of my problem. But the [circle volunteers] stood by me and over the point of years I sort of been working on keeping myself busy, keep the positive thoughts. I've made some improvements. I wish I was further along but it's a work in progress.*

Another core member describes the progress he has made in CoSA:

*I'm used to being around drunks and guys using dope. And when I see and hear other people's sides of life, and I look at them differently and I say 'oh wow, these are real people.' And I see realness and I can connect to that... It's given me a sense of responsibility. At one point I didn't care about community, and now I care about other people. And that's a big difference, when you start caring about other people.*



While we note the impact of CoSA pragmatically in terms of enhancing community safety, we also note the impact of CoSA in terms of building a community of people (lay and professional) who are willing to challenge the prevailing stereotype of sex offenders as monsters, and with compassion are willing to assist another human being in their time of need. Thus while CoSA undoubtedly builds community, it builds a community of people who are willing to help, as one volunteer expresses it, “the lowest of the low”.

*A wheel needs to have spokes for it to turn and to support it right, So, we're the hub, our volunteers and our circle are the support that is being done by the spokes. That's what CoSA is-it's giving you the ability to not roll backwards but to roll forward. And when you run into a bump that may cause the tire to go flat or something, members of your circle are there to help rebuild what was broke, or to patch up what needs to be fixed.*

*- Circle Volunteer*

## SITE CASE

### STUDY: SOUTH SASKATCHEWAN

*Core Member: I've been in and out since I was 16. There are about four years that I haven't been in prison over that. But every year, in and out, in and out, in and out.*

*Interviewer: Except for now.*

*Core Member: Since March 2010 it's been the longest; has a lot to do with CoSA and other community resources I've been able to use.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Circles of Support and Accountability South Saskatchewan (CoSA SS) Case Study is part of an on-going evaluation of the national demonstration project. The evaluation aims to determine the effectiveness of the CoSA project, factors across program sites that have aided or hindered its impact on recidivism rates, and how the program can be improved. The CoSA SS Case Study is part of the development of comparative case studies to examine the different practices and structures of varying CoSA sites across Canada, and how these differences impact the success of the CoSA project.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

This Case Study will study the specific history of the South Saskatchewan CoSA site, exploring its unique development and operational structure. It will breakdown the construction of the circle and the activities in which circle members partake within the context of the South Saskatchewan region. Finally, it will review the major challenges and issues, and opportunities and successes, faced by the site, utilizing the experiences of CoSA SS

core members. This case study will not compare the South Saskatchewan organization to other CoSA sites across Canada, or provide recommendations for future site changes and developments. Instead, it will provide an illustration of, and observations on, the processes of the site.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The CoSA South Saskatchewan site was chosen to be part of a comparative analysis of how different CoSA sites function across Canada. The sites were chosen to represent the diversity of program sites across the country (location, language, ethnicity of participants, etc.). The methodology of the case study involved a review of the South Saskatchewan site profile, program documents and reports, interviews with core members, and interviews with Circle Volunteers.

## **SOUTH SASKATCHEWAN CONTEXT**

### **GEOGRAPHY**

CoSA South Saskatchewan operates mainly in Regina; however, the site also coordinates circles in Saskatoon and the Raymore Area. Currently there are 14 circles running, with nine in Regina, four in Saskatoon, and one in Raymore Area.

CoSA SS has policies in place to ensure that people living in rural areas outside of Regina are not disadvantaged, and have the same access to the program and CoSA resources as people living within the city. One core member interviewed speaks to taking advantage of this policy, and noted that CoSA SS paid for gas mileage for his trips to circle meetings. A Circle Volunteer clarified that the policy is that for people living over 50 kilometres outside of Regina CoSA SS will pay for mileage.

### **HISTORY**

Informally, CoSA South Saskatchewan began in 1989. A young man who had committed offences against young children was being released to

Regina, and someone at the penitentiary he was being released from (Prince Albert Saskatchewan Penitentiary) believed that he would be better placed to integrate into the community if he joined a church and had a support group. This man, Orville Andres, placed a call to Florence and Otto Driedger about the issue. The Driedgers placed a call to the Peace Mennonite Church to determine whether the young man would be able to attend the church.

The response from Peace Mennonite Church was that he would be accepted into the community and a plan was formed that the church community be aware of the nature of his offences and that he would not be left alone with children. Periodically in his time in the church a small group of the congregation met with him to assist in his integration into the community. When he moved to another church on the urging of his family, and a new pastor took over who was unaware of the man's offenses, he ended up breaching his parole by being on a bus with children and being sent back to jail.

In 1994, formal initiatives to develop Circles of Support and Accountability nationally took place. Because of his involvement in restorative justice and experience in the informal Peace Mennonite Church support circle, Otto Driedger participated in the national consultations.

Using materials developed by the Mennonite Central Committee, Ontario, for the first official Circle in Hamilton, the structure of CoSA in Regina was developed. A Steering Committee for Circles was adopted, which included representatives of church denominations interested in restorative justice, and members from support agencies (parole, probation, halfway houses, police, prosecutor, social services, and mental health and justice). Monthly meetings were held to develop policy for the local site, review potential core members, and assess the progression of the organization as a whole.

## **PRIOR FUNDING**

During the stage of informal CoSA SS initiatives, Circles and other plans were made on a volunteer basis with no financial resources. After establishing the CoSA SS services, the Chaplaincy Division of the Correctional Service of Canada was approached for funding (as they had previously provided some funds for CoSA services) and an initial annual grant was provided. A small grant is also received annually from Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan and Mennonite Church Saskatchewan.

In 2009 CoSA sites across Canada succeeded in coming to an arrangement with the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) in collaboration with the Church Council of Justice and Corrections (CCJC). CoSA South Saskatchewan is part of the CoSA network receiving demonstration project funding from NCPC, which is managed by CCJC. The national budget, totaling approximately 7.4 million dollars, covers the five-year period from October 1, 2009 to December 31, 2014. In March 2010, CoSA SS was formally granted non-profit organizational status.

## **EVOLUTION OF THE SITE**

Many of the principles of the first official CoSA circle in Hamilton were used to establish the CoSA SS site. The focus of CoSA SS when founded was on providing support and accountability on a friendship basis for sex offenders and other persons considered dangerous. The program was open to those who had a genuine desire to change their ways and to lead a productive life integrated into their community. In South Saskatchewan, an additional focus was placed on public education and communication, in order to improve acceptance and assimilation of the core members into the community.

Throughout the evolution of CoSA SS since its official founding, these values have remained crucial to the organization. The CoSA SS mission statement is as follows:

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) are community volunteers who form a circle of friendship around released high-risk sex offenders to assist these individuals to successfully reintegrate into the community by offering support, modeling and encouraging a law-abiding life style and holding each other accountable for our behaviour.

While maintaining their core values, the site has evolved from volunteer driven informal circles, to a fully-fledged CoSA site. While in the early stages of its work CoSA SS was made up of church members in informal support groups, CoSA SS is now comprised of a Board of Directors, a Steering Committee and a number of circles of support and accountability.

The Board of Directors is comprised of five to seven members of CoSA SS. Its role is to act as the public “face” of CoSA SS, oversee administration, supervise staff, provide leadership and accountability, and act as the legal entity.

The Steering Committee is comprised of members from community organizations that support the work of CoSA. There is no maximum or minimum number of representatives that can sit on the CoSA SS Steering Committee. The Committee is established by the Board of Directors, and addresses operational issues related to the circles of CoSA SS. The representatives bring their own expertise and knowledge used to advise the Board and support CoSA SS. Collectively, the Steering Committee screens and approves core members, supports the training of volunteers, advises the site coordinator on issues related to core members, connects with faith communities, acts as a liaison between community organizations and CoSA SS, and advises the Board about operational policies and overall direction of CoSA SS.

Currently, Steering Committee members include representatives or Regina City Police, Regina Rural RCMP, Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice (Justice and Attorney General and Corrections

and Policing), Correctional Services Canada, Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, Archdiocese of Regina, Lutheran Church of Canada, United Church of Canada, and the University of Regina. At this time, CoSA SS mainly receives core member referrals from Saskatchewan Penitentiary and Regional Psychiatric Centre. Presentations for parole officers made by the CoSA SS Site Coordinator at the Saskatchewan Penitentiary have resulted in increased communication between CoSA SS and the Penitentiary, and ultimately more offender referrals to CoSA. As well, CoSA SS has also given presentations to and developed partnerships with Regina City Police, Saskatoon City Police, Saskatchewan Justice, and Saskatchewan Police Chiefs. These presentations educate the audience on CoSA's work and issues relating to integration, and have also resulted in greater referrals because of closer organizational ties.

Since CoSA SS began there have been circles for a total of 21 persons. Of those 21, only one person has re-offended in a violent sexual manner. While other core members have breached conditions of their parole, there has only been one incident of serious violent re-offending. This is a 95% reduction of reoffending with participating core members. This data is consistent with national research, which indicates a reduction of more than 80% in violent offending among CoSA participants compared to a control group.

CoSA SS recently launched a website ([www.cosasouthsk.com](http://www.cosasouthsk.com)), which hosts an overview of the history of the site, resources for volunteers (training manuals, academic articles), and web copies of their Newsletter "Within The Circle".

## CIRCLES

Circles are the primary method through which CoSA SS aims to achieve their goals of reducing the risk of re-offending among released sex offenders, easing their transition into the community, and assist with their reintegration. The circle should balance support and accountability for the core

member, creating a positive atmosphere where the core member is encouraged to change their behaviour with the ultimate goal of No More Victims.

## Structure

At CoSA SS, the Circle is comprised of the Outer Circle and the Inner Circle. The Outer Circle is the Steering Committee (members listed above) and organisations in the community that support the work of CoSA SS. The Inner Circle is made up of the core member and the Circle Volunteers, and occasionally members of the core member's case management team, such as a parole officer. When forming a circle the site coordinator matches volunteers with core members based on them being a good fit for each other.

## Core Members

Core members are high-risk sex offenders who have been released from prison or jail. In South Saskatchewan, as previously discussed, they are typically referred from an institution (Saskatchewan Penitentiary, Oskana Community Correctional, Regional Psychiatric Centre, Regina Provincial Correctional Centre). They are first interviewed by the site coordinator, and then attend several meetings with the coordinator. This is so the site coordinator can get to know them based on their character, limitations and even hobbies. Once the core member has been approved by the Steering Committee (who meet monthly) the circle beings.

Through interviews, CoSA SS core members were asked what their motivation for joining CoSA was, and why they were interested in the organization's work. For the majority, responses can fit into three overlapping categories. First, that they were motivated by a desire to change their lifestyle and situation. For example, one core member answered, *"I would check it out, I'll give it a try...But I was willing to give it a try, I wanted to change my lifestyle from a dysfunctional one to one that can function better in the community."*

Second, they could not make this change without support, of which they were lacking. Many core members reported having no personal support system from friends or family as a result of their offense or time in correctional facilities. One core member said he joined CoSA for all these reasons: *“Personal choice. Having support. Having friends. Getting out of the joint and having no friends, no one to have coffee with is—so it gives me someone to talk with and go have coffee.”* Another said, *“For me, I don’t have any family so I thought it would be beneficial to me, being a sex offender. More for support.”* This suggests that core members are drawn to the idea of positive social interaction, a characteristic that is necessary for them to exhibit positive social behavior rather than antisocial or reclusive behaviour.

Third, core members remained involved with CoSA SS because it was a personal choice that they could make for themselves. One core member states it plainly, explaining, *“I didn’t have to do it – I could choose to do it or not. After 3 ½ years of everybody tell you what to do, everybody taking apart what you say to a total different meaning.”* This suggests that the mere act of becoming involved with the circle empowers core members and allows them some level of autonomy, while also increasing their accountability as they become voluntarily involved with a group of mentors and friends.

## Circle Volunteers

As discussed, the CoSA SS site has developed partnerships (and continues to develop partnerships) with faith-based communities as well as the University of Regina. These organisations are used as a main source of circle volunteers and steering committee members. By requesting presentations on CoSA to their membership, and posting information on websites on how people can get involved, these organisations have been helpful in gathering volunteers. In general though, circle volunteers are recruited through the contacts made by the site coordinator.

Once a volunteer applies, they are given an intake interview with the site coordinator. This interview explains CoSA and its expectations of circle

volunteers. Applicants are given the volunteer manual to take home and review before basic training.

Initial basic training is usually run by the site coordinator and lasts a few hours. Periodically throughout the year, and based on need and specific situation, volunteers also receive ongoing and advanced training. In order to plan the ongoing and advanced training sessions based on identified need, the site coordinator determines what has been going on in the circles and picks out key issues for discussion. Preferably, an expert on the subject conducts the training or leads the discussion. If specific core members have certain limitations and needs, additional information is provided to the Volunteers in the basic training session.

## Meetings

The first circle always takes place in public. Once the circle members feel comfortable they decide where and when to hold the circles. CoSA SS does not have a schedule or official procedure for Circle meetings. In general, according to interviews of core members and circle volunteers, the newer the core member is to the circle, the more often full circle meetings take place. Aside from these full group circle meetings, CoSA SS members also participate in one-on-one meetings depending on the need of the core member. The experience of one core member illustrates the flexibility of the circle structure:

*I guess I used CoSA a lot at the beginning. A lot of frustrations, and first year wasn’t easy here, so I relied on the opportunity to ventilate. At the beginning besides the one time a week that I needed to talk someone came and was available to talk. They’re there 24 hours a day if needed to talk about anything, which is beneficial for me. To know that outside of—because I don’t have a lot of friends or family—knowing that there’s someone there all the time; that I don’t have to rely on the parole officers. Somebody outside of the system.*

While the circle meetings do seem to be flexible, they are also respected by the core members. One core member says, *“I phone these guys once a week just to touch bases with them, go for one-on-ones once and a while with them, and let them know that I’m doing OK and everything’s going good or if I do have a problem come to them if I can’t go to my mom go to them at least. Make sure that if I am going to be late for a circle I phone, treat it like an appointment.”* This seems to indicate that even without a harshly structured meeting schedule or agenda, core members remain accountable to the system and respect the time and energies of their Circle.

In the same way that the meeting times and dates are flexible depending on the individual core member and circle, discussion topics vary from circle to circle. While discussion topics reported by core members range from the casual (coffee and catch-up) to the informal (jokes), all core members also identified their circle meetings as places to vent if necessary. For example, one core member notes, *“They helped me with just someone to talk to if I’m having a bad day. Somewhere to vent. They don’t judge me for venting. They know I’ve had a bad day and they know I usually vent sometimes and they just work through it with me.”* Another says of his meetings, *“Usually it’s casual talk. When I need to talk about something then it becomes about me. Opportunity to explain what’s bothering me, any issues, or opportunity to ventilate”.*

It is important to note that this works both ways. One circle volunteer says, *“The way you do it as well is you are not uptight when we share around the circle. We each talk about what’s happened in our week. And if someone else has had an absolute terrible week we might spend more time with that other person than with [the core member] that week. Because the circle is a circle for all of us...”* The responses from both core members and circle volunteers suggest that generally circle meetings are just a time when a group of friends get together and chat about what is going on in each other’s lives. If and when the core member needs to have a more directed conversation about challenges they are facing, the meeting discussion will naturally shift.

While this showcases the “support” that CoSA SS Circles provide for core members, it also demonstrates that there must be a high level of transparency and trust between the core members and circle volunteers. One core member addresses this, stating, *“It’s an assignment on their part as well. The agreement was to be open and honest, and I think things have grown from that. I think my circle anyway is confident in me, whenever I talk to them, that it’s the truth. Trust goes a long way, so it’s both sides.”* This trust and openness must be present in order to provide both the support and accountability that CoSA is founded on, and ensure that problems the core members are facing are addressed in a timely manner.

## Dynamics

For CoSA SS, many decisions for the circle are made by the circle themselves. For example, when placing a volunteer on an existing circle the site coordinator must first get approval from the circle itself. The circle members must come to an agreement as to whether they want another volunteer. If approval is given, the volunteer and site coordinator meet the circle together for the first introduction. The volunteer and core member both give input on whether the new volunteer should continue with the circle.

Circles also often evolve in order to keep a balance of new and experienced volunteers. For example, when new volunteers are placed on an established circle, experienced volunteers move to newer circles. In order to not disrupt the core members positive relationships, when this happens the experienced volunteer often maintains contact with the previous core member through a mentorship type of arrangement.

As previously noted, the primary dynamic of the circle is one of friendship and acceptance. Through story sharing and honesty trust is built between core members and circle volunteers. One core member shares, *“I’ve got to know a lot of people. It works both ways; sometimes I need to ventilate. I’ve had members call me up because they want to talk. It works both ways.”*



When a circle closes the site coordinator provides the Volunteers with a circle debriefing and support.

## UNIQUE FEATURES

While all CoSA sites across Canada share core values, the structure of each site is different. CoSA SS employs two staff members, as well having a voluntary Board of Directors and Steering Committee. The first staff position is the site coordinator, who reports to the Board of Directors. The site coordinator is responsible for engaging services used to fund CoSA SS, and engaging the media, professionals, faith communities, and other organizations that can contribute to and support CoSA (either in terms of volunteers, training, integration of core members, or community safety). Specifically, the site coordinator identifies, interviews and recommends core members and volunteers; establishes and monitors circles; establishes and maintains open lines of communication with community partners and CoSA members; submits reports as required by funding agencies; and continues to develop CoSA SS as a small NGO in an effective and efficient manner.

The second staff position at CoSA SS is the data coordinator, who reports to the site coordinator. The data coordinator is responsible for all data entry and administrative duties. Specifically, the data coordinator gathers all quantitative and qualitative data; submits the required reports; assists evaluators with any aspect of their research; provides assistance with training, education sessions and meetings; and meets with all stakeholders as needed and directed.

In order to ensure that all volunteers receive standard training, CoSA SS has developed a Volunteer Manual. This manual is a 26-page document that provides an overview of CoSA, the criminal justice system in Canada, and basic theoretical and psychological background to working with offenders. The contents of the Manual are as follows:

- Mission Statement
- CoSA Principles
- Three Mantras to Remember
- Who Do We Work With?
- The Canadian Criminal Justice System
- Community Reaction to Sex Offenders in the Community
- Out of Community = Isolation
- An Alternative
- Origins of CoSA
- CoSA Today
- CoSA in Regina
- Our Core Members
- Role of Volunteers
- Video: “Forging a Community”
- Risk Factors and Protective Factors
- Types of Relationships
- What is CoSA?
- Organizational Structure
- What are Core Members to Do?
- The Importance of Story Telling
- Who Volunteers?
- Time Commitment
- Technical Requirements for Volunteers
- Together
- The Covenant
- Video: “No More Victims”
- Does it Work?
- Harm Reduction
- Appendix A: Boundaries
- Appendix B: Dealing with Trauma
- Appendix C: Philosophical Models CoSA Subscribes To
- Appendix D: Factors of Recidivism
- Glossary

The CoSA SS site does not have any other written policies, as it is felt that written policies would be binding. This site operates on a more individual basis, where everyone at the site is engaged differently due to their abilities.

## ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

### Logistics

Logistically, CoSA SS early on in their history dealt with a few funding and staffing issues, and has continued to attempt to obtain community support or services from certain groups who have been unresponsive.

Early on, CoSA SS struggled with not receiving National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) funding until the end of the quarter. They also experienced the site coordinator resigning with little notice, and having to replace the data coordinator who did not fulfill the job requirements.

Members of CoSA SS have also noted that it has also been challenging (although a good learning experience) to deal with manipulative core members, and run circles with mainly new volunteers.

Finally, CoSA SS has not experienced enough Aboriginal representation and involvement from the community. The current site coordinator has been told this by core members and has tried to engage this sector of the community with little success. For example, one core member mentioned the attempt of his circle to set up meetings with an Aboriginal minister: *“They tried at the beginning to get—there’s a minister, it’s a woman, and she lives on the reserve and they tried to get her and come and see me but she won’t do it. She’s—I don’t know. I don’t know if it’s just—even ministers can have that feeling.”* The core member suggests that the minister’s motivation for not participating is his crimes, however a circle volunteer believes there is a different explanation. The volunteer counters, *“I think her workload... is so that she misses an awful lot of things. You’re not the only one. Her pattern is one where she doesn’t follow through on a lot of things. She just has so much and she feel pulled in so many directions.”* Regardless of the particular reasons in this example, CoSA SS has struggled to garner enough involvement in the Aboriginal community. Volunteers have also asked for more training on how to integrate core members back into their Aboriginal communities.

## Communication

Most core members interviewed make the distinction between challenges with or within the circle, and general challenges they have experienced since their release from jail or

prison. Referring to the former, more than half of the core members stated in interviews that they have experienced no challenges with CoSA directly. For example, when asked with the most difficult thing about the circle is, one core member responded, *“I’ve never experienced it difficult, so I don’t know.”* Similarly, a core member asked about the most challenging aspect of the circle answered, *“I didn’t feel like there were any challenges at all. Everything is just made comfortable.”* Another replied, *“Not too many challenges because I’m pretty focused on what I have to do, and I keep busy by working every day.”* In total, 57% of core members interviewed from CoSA SS reported that they had no challenges with their circle.

Of the 43% of core members interviewed that did mention challenges within the circle, 67% reported the challenge as being asked difficult questions or being challenged to think differently by the circle volunteers. One core member shared that they sometimes struggle with communicating their thoughts and feelings to the group. The core member links this challenge to when he is talking about the more difficult subject matter. When asked what challenges him in the group he says,

*When I don’t know how to put something that I want to say, and I don’t know how to just come out and say it. I want to present it properly. Because sometimes the things—and it’s when I bring it up, it’s not what they bring up. I just like their advice or ask advice. Some of it I like very much and other times I’m stubborn. That would be probably the strongest feelings, like when I have to say something that I don’t like to say but it still has to be said sometimes.*

Again, this underlines the importance of transparency and trust within the circle. While data from interviews of CoSA SS core members suggests clear communication, it is important for the site to continue to foster an environment where core members feel that they can share in a non-judgmental environment, in order to release their stress and focus on coping mechanisms.



## Public Perception

In contrast, when asked by the interviewer, “What challenges have you experienced since your release?” core members were able to provide specific examples of difficulties they have experienced. This suggests that the core members feel very comfortable within their own circles, but continue to feel exclusion in the community as a whole. Primarily, the interviewed core members mentioned struggles with media attention and the way they are perceived by the public. One core member shares, “*Challenge I guess is just dealing with some people on the streets. Some people they’re just, they’re ignorant.*”

When discussing their experiences with negative public perception, core members have demonstrated an understanding of how their past offenses elicit these responses for others, and how they can move past it. For example, one core member says:

*Acceptance is the biggest thing, and then understanding. That, yeah, I’m a sex offender; yeah, I’ve done it for a long time. Can I stop? Absolutely. And that’s it. I hope. Yes I can, I mean I’ve got to be positive about that. And I think I’m doing the right things to keep away from offending. I just have to make sure I keep doing what I’m doing.*

Another core member notes, “*Once they get to know me, people I think accept me pretty well but there’s a lot that don’t even want to get to know me. And that’s their right. I don’t have anything over that, and if they don’t want to have anything to do with me that’s fine.*” While it is positive that the core members feel comfortable discussing these experiences with their circles, public perception is a challenge that CoSA SS continues to struggle with, and will continue to struggle against as long as there is a lack of understanding of restorative justice within the general public.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND SUCCESSES

### Support: Coping Mechanism

One area that CoSA SS has been successful in is providing unwavering support for core members in the program. By allowing core members to be themselves and speak honestly about their past offenses and behaviors, and openly discussing how core members can deal with these feelings and impulses and move past them, CoSA SS becomes a coping mechanism for offenders to deal with their negative behaviours. One core member discusses this safe atmosphere:

*The main thing was that I didn’t have to do this, and then I think we became friends. At the beginning it was a little scary for me; it really was. I didn’t know what to expect and then they didn’t seem to be upset at all about my offending. You know, where did that come from, how is that possible? Those were the kinds of things going through my mind.*

Another core member mentions how the circle has become something he relies on for support:

*After 810 I don’t have to be in the Circle anymore but I choose to keep it going just for the simple fact that they’re support. They’re not just the Circle, now they’re my friends. We can make friends, relationships, in a Circle. If it wasn’t for them I probably would have had more of a hard time trying to get myself organized and trying to get things done...Here I’ve got four people I can run to.*

Ultimately, CoSA SS has succeeded in making the circles a safe space that core members feel supported in—a kind of support which results in positive behaviour from the core members, as they have come to rely on the relationships they have built in a positive way and be less inclined to jeopardize them.

## **Empowerment: Community Integration**

Along the same lines, CoSA SS Circles have empowered the core members to see themselves as more than just offenders or perpetrators, but members of society. This encourages them to integrate into the community and take part in positive social behaviour. For example, one core member compares his past relationships with his current circle:

*When I look at how the inmates treated me in the pen, and how they treat me here after being involved with CoSA and that in a different attitude now. They show me a whole bunch of respect. And in the pen it was just different...just a downer. But when they see you here and you're living a positive lifestyle and they say, "this is not"—and it has to do with being around healthy people. That's what it's all about: being around healthy people.*

Another core member suggests the power of positive role models and how this encourages core members to adopt better lifestyle habits, noting, *"When you're around dysfunctional people all your life you don't hang around with professors and priests and bishops and all that...You meet these kind of people and they're healthy and you realize, "Wow." It encourages you to keep going"* This is a sentiment echoed by another core member, who says, *"It's encouraging being around them, that's why I've stuck with them for the last four years. I've, I didn't see any—I've never sought help before. And if I did it was always a downer. When I sought help before it was a downer, with CoSA it's been different."*

While CoSA SS circles may not have a structured process or timeline, it seems that simply by core members interacting with "normal" members of their community in a casual setting, and feeling that they are not being assessed or looked down upon they are empowered to model their behaviours after their fellow Circle Members. Though being treated as "normal" themselves, and by being held to "normal" behaviors through the accountability

mechanisms of the circle, the core members are willing and eager to change their behaviours and integrate into their communities. This no doubt is a major contributing factor in the extremely low recidivism rate of CoSA SS (95% of participants do not reoffend).

## **Capacity Building**

Over the short history of CoSA SS, the site has grown drastically in capacity. There has been growth in the numbers of core members, Volunteers, and relationships in the community. With the new site and data coordinators there has been an even greater increase in core member referrals. The site has also seen an increase in desire from other organizations to be a part of CoSA, and an increase in efficiency as some circles have been assembled on short notice.

In terms of events and initiatives outside of circle activity, CoSA SS annual events held for core members have had good turnout. The site has succeeded in launching a web presence with their new website, and are now publishing a newsletter, which is also posted in electronic copy on the website. Not only does this make information about CoSA SS and its programs more accessible, it also creates a better institutional history and memory for the site. If funding and community support for CoSA SS are consistent, the capacity of CoSA SS will continue to grow.

## **CONCLUSION**

CoSA South Saskatchewan began its initiatives informally in 1989, and ran its first official circle in 2001. Since then, it has grown to become one of the national CoSA sites, funded in part by the demonstration project funding by the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) in collaboration with the Church Council of Justice and Corrections (CCJC). While core members have reported struggling with public perception and communication within their circles, and CoSA SS has faced some logistical challenges,

overall the site has grown successfully. CoSA SS has been incredibly successful in reducing reoffending rates amongst program participants by 95%, higher than the CoSA national average of 83%. Relying on a very flexible structure, suited to the individual needs of each core member and Circle, CoSA SS has been successful in supporting and empowering core members to reintegrate into their communities, while also building the capacity of the organization. Data suggests that the positive influence of circle volunteers and the positive support system of the circle result in core members investing more effort in their recovery and integration.

*“Me being out this long says a lot. And this has been a core support—CoSA has been—for me. I really appreciate the friendship I’ve had with these people for the last four years or so”*

## SITE CASE STUDY: VANCOUVER/FRASER VALLEY

*The circle creates an arena for me to be myself, and to not fear being judged or rejected. Before the circle I didn’t know what love is, or how to love. My mother killed herself when I was 18 and I shut down after that. Being in the circle, I am learning to function like everyone else in a healthy way, not having to fear going back to prison again, not having to live the way I used to live, not having to think the way I used to think; I was trapped in that whole thinking because if you can’t let it out and expose the secrets they entrap you and enslave you completely. CoSA represents freedom. It is nice to be accepted for who I really am despite what I have done.*

*- Core Member*

## INTRODUCTION

This is a case study of the Vancouver/Fraser Valley (VfV) Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) project. The purpose of this case study is to provide a detailed account of this site, how it functions, how it has evolved, unique features, and its impact. Through this case study, I hope readers gain a better understanding of Circles of Support and Accountability in Vancouver/Fraser Valley, where this site has come from, what it has struggled with, what it has, and is still trying to, accomplish.

Embedded in this case study are the stories of three core members. These narratives are meant to give further insight into the past experiences, daily living, and impact of CoSA on people who have sexually offended. Furthermore, this case

study also feeds into the larger evaluation of the CoSA National Demonstration Project. This case study will provide a more in-depth understanding of this CoSA site and will be used in a cross-case comparison with two other site case studies. While other studies have demonstrated that CoSA works, this evaluation attempts to answer the questions of *how* and *why* CoSA works in order to better inform CoSA practices both within Canada and internationally.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This case study was constructed using three lines of evidence: site documentation, key informant interviews, and volunteer journals. These multiple lines of evidence provide different perspectives of the phenomena occurring at this site, which in turn provides a more detailed and less biased account of what is occurring at the site.

### **Site Documentation**

Documents used include quarterly indicator reports, job descriptions, site protocols, training material, and promotional material. These documents were used to gain a better understanding of site operations, protocols, history, and challenges.

### **Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with the project manager, the two circle coordinators, six circle volunteers, and nine core members. All interviews were 20 – 75 minutes in length, either over the phone or in-person, and transcribed verbatim. Additionally, a written statement from the Area Director of Correctional Services Canada was submitted in lieu of an interview.

### **Volunteer journals**

Circle volunteers were asked to keep a journal for a one year period, of their circle activities, conversations, progress, setbacks, and general feelings about how the circle is functioning. These journals were submitted in September 2013 and

May 2014 as either handwritten notes or word-processed electronic files.

## **ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

My role in this case study was mainly that of an observer, data collector, and analyst. I have listened to the accounts of the project manager, circle coordinator, circle volunteers, and core members, and have asked questions to gain a better understanding of the functioning of this site and CoSAs across the country. I have attempted to distill and express my knowledge, interpretation, observations, and insight through this case study. The sum of my role is in this case study and in the final evaluation.

## **DESCRIPTION OF SITE**

The Vancouver/Fraser Valley site is composed of a project manager, a data coordinator, two circle coordinators, 70 circle volunteers, and two boards of directors. It currently runs 15 circles, but has served 36 circles and trained 137 volunteers since the start of the National Demonstration Project in April 2010.

### **Staff**

Maureen Donegan is the coordinator of Catholic Charities Justice Services of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver. She began in 2004 as the project manager of Fraser Valley CoSA and then with the advent of the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC) demonstration project she became coordinator of the amalgamated Vancouver/Fraser Valley CoSA.

Linnea Groom is the data coordinator for the Vancouver/Fraser Valley site. She is employed by M2/W2 Association and has filled the role of data coordinator and bookkeeper for VFV CoSA since October 2009. Her other role within the agency is as a volunteer coordinator for a one-on-one volunteer program in a women's prison.

Frank Sawatsky is one of two circle coordinators. He is employed by M2/W2 Association, and has been with the Vancouver/Fraser Valley site since April 2010.

Germaine Solaiman is one of two circle coordinators. She is employed by M2/W2 Association, and has been with the Vancouver/Fraser Valley site since October 2010.

With the current funding scheme, the site staff contribute a total of four part time positions. However, the termination of NCPC funding in October 2014 is projected to reduce funding to one third of what it has now, which will allow for slightly less than one full time position.

## **Location**

This site operates a large geographical area from downtown Vancouver, to North Vancouver, to Surrey, to Langley, to Abbotsford, Chilliwack and Hope; a span of 150km between site locations. With this geographic spread come nine municipalities – each operating its own police jurisdiction, parole and probation offices. In some municipalities multiple probation and parole offices exist within one municipality that work with this site's core members.

The site office is in Abbotsford and is shared with the M2/W2 organization. Since there is such a large geographic spread, this site also has meeting spaces in Aldergrove, Surrey, and three other locations in Vancouver. The space is mainly provided by religious organizations such as Holy Rosary Church, First Baptist Church, Guardian Angel Church, Nightshift Street Ministries, St. Dunstan Anglican Church, and M2/W2.

## **GOVERNANCE**

When the demonstration project began it was decided that M2/W2 would be the agency to administer the funding for the project and that the project would continue to be operated jointly by both M2/W2 and Catholic Charities Justice

Services (CCJS). A formal advisory committee was created to provide operational oversight and consultation for the demonstration project. It is comprised of three representatives from M2/W2 and three representatives from CCJS all of whom had experience working with the client base. While this committee does not have decision-making power, it impacts decisions made on policy issues, volunteer issues, and core member issues. They have been very supportive over the years, and the Project Manager, Maureen Donegan, has always valued their advice.

## **SITE OPERATIONS**

Core members are typically referred to CoSA by federal or provincial institutions. On a monthly basis, the project manager receives a WED list from Correctional Services of Canada (CSC) institutions. This list allows her to contact potential core members. Additional networking is done through parole officers with clients in halfway houses. Once an offender has been identified, Maureen interviews him/her in the correctional facility, and conducts the core member screenings to determine if the core member is a good fit with CoSA. The core member needs to be able to admit that they need the help and support of CoSA, as well as do a full disclosure of offenses to the circle volunteers when they first meet.

Volunteers are recruited through presentations given to church members, community groups and universities. Additionally, CoSA has access to the CCJS volunteer pool. Individuals who are interested in volunteering in prison ministry are screened, and then potential volunteers for CoSA are selected from this wider pool of recruits. Interviews are conducted with all potential volunteers and CPICs and reference checks are processed for those that are deemed suitable. New volunteers attend orientation training and basic training to learn about the principles of CoSA. Advanced training has been increased to four times a year and covers topics that the volunteers request and need.

In order to promote CoSA and engage with the community, extensive networking is done to develop and maintain positive working relationships with community partners. CoSA information evenings are held annually to educate and foster a positive working relationship with the parole and probation jurisdictions that supervise core members as well as with halfway houses where the LTSO core members reside along with a variety of agencies whose services the core members access. Additionally, the project manager presents the circles program to police, parole and probation offices in the nine municipalities, correctional staff, local government, and interested community and professional groups (e.g., psychologists, social worker, housing management, clinical social workers, BC housing, thrift shops and churches).

## Circles

A circle is made up of three to five trained volunteers and a core member who has been detained to the end of a federal sentence for a sexual offense and who voluntarily requests a circle. Monitoring and support of the volunteers is done through the coordinators' supervision of the circles both in communication with circles and periodic attendance at circle meetings.

In assembling a circle, consideration is given to who is available in the region where the core member will be living, whose schedules can be coordinated for circle meeting times for the core member, and the availability of meeting space. Ideally each circle has both male and female volunteers, and a mix of personalities. Staff try to avoid placing a group of volunteers who have previously been together on one circle onto another circle because it tends to make it more difficult for their new core member to bond with them when they have already developed relationships with one another. Additionally, choosing volunteers for a circle is specific for each core member according to their needs.

### *Circle Check-In*

*[The check in was a] really neat thing for me because these people chose to love me before they even met me, and this is after they read my file... so here I am in the room with them and they are sharing their lives with me and they don't even know me. This helped to build a close rapport and trust in the group. And I began the journey of them mirroring to me healthy living, health coping, and managing.*

*(Core Member)*

Once a prospective core member has been interviewed and his file has been reviewed, prospective volunteers are approached. The volunteers are given a general profile of the core member, including the offence history. The initial first meeting is typically scheduled in the prison before the core member is released. However, in some cases core members are referred after release into the community. During the first meeting the core member discloses his offenses to the volunteers. With the core member's permission, the parole officer may attend part of the meeting so that someone who is familiar with the whole file is present. In the first meeting the core member and circle volunteers are asked to think about what should be in their circle's covenant.

Circle meetings for new circles are always held weekly. Eventually they cascade down to every other week and monthly. However, there is nothing standard about the length of time before the frequency of meetings change. It is based on the needs of the individual core members. In the first few weeks after a core member has been released, someone from the circle contacts them daily, in person or over the phone. As with circle meetings, the one-on-one contact is usually more frequent initially and lessens over time. Events in a core members life can cause the frequency of both one-on-one and circle meetings to increase again at any point.

Every circle starts with a check-in where Circle Volunteers and the core member share something that was a challenge from their day or week that they may, or may not, have handled well; this is to ensure that the volunteers are not just sharing from a superficial level and then asking the core member to share from a deeper level, as well as model healthy behaviours and challenges. Volunteers then ask questions, offer feedback and may follow up on previous goals set and commitments made. There is a Constant and Situational Factor sheet of questions that are used periodically to be sure the circle is addressing the challenges of the core member. The covenant can also be reviewed periodically and updated as needed. Other circle meetings include celebrations of milestones in the core member's life in a social and recreational atmosphere.

In terms of circle composition, this site has found two men and two women work best, and it is preferable if the circle volunteers are over 35. Older circle volunteers come with more life experience and typically a longer time commitment; Maureen notes, *"You have to make a year commitment, but the guys often need much longer after a year. And if one [Circle Volunteer] leaves, it changes the whole dynamic"*.

The specific boundaries around one-on-one meetings are set by the circle, and are based on the offenses of the core member. A volunteer is generally not restricted in having one-on-one meetings with a core member of the same gender; however, volunteers are restricted to meeting a core member of the opposite gender only in public places or possibly restricted to not meeting with the core member alone. There isn't a "typical" one-on-one meeting. Meetings could include phone conversations, meeting for coffee, accompanying to appointments, and a wide variety of other options.

There are many situations in which a circle must close. This could be when a core member successfully integrates and no longer needs a circle,

when a core member chooses to not work with the program, when a core member moves away or dies, or a core member receives new charges. When a circle is closed the support of CoSA ends. CoSA does not provide court attendance or institutional visits because they are a community based group and their mandate is to keep the community safe. Additionally, this site does not have enough volunteers to support prison visits; the volunteers are reassigned to other circles while a core member is in prison. When a circle is closed, a debriefing is held with volunteers and they may be invited to sit on another circle for another core member. The goal of the debrief is to maintain volunteers by refocusing the volunteers on the goals of the CoSA program, as well as to improve the program through the feedback.

## EVOLUTION OF SITE

The Vancouver/Fraser Valley site started in 1997 when a contract was entered into between CSC Chaplaincy and M2/W2 to fund CoSA Fraser Valley. Despite attempts to develop the program, it was closed two years later. In October of 2005, the CSC Chaplaincy offered contracts to Catholic Charities Justice Services (CCJS) and M2/W2 to jointly run CoSA Fraser Valley. Maureen Donegan was asked to coordinate the program with the help of M2/W2 given that the organization had some experience with the program. Wayne Northey and Bernie Martens were the co-directors of M2/W2 at the time and they provided assistance with volunteer training, supervision in circles, and administration. Maureen commented, "So it was a win-win situation with the two of them offering support and even feedback to me, they were people that I could talk to about the CoSA program".

Maureen was responsible for running the day-to-day activities, core member and circle volunteer recruitment, circle coordination, finding spaces for circles to meet, and solving problems in groups. Andrew McWhinnie, the regional coordinator of CoSA, gave direction for the implementation of



the program, and at this time, the site followed the CoSA mandate of coordinating circles for mainly WED sex offenders who sometimes were “coming out with no money, no place to live, and public notifications”.

#### *A One-Staff Site*

*It is a very different program when it is just one person running the program. My experience was trying to build a program and learning about it myself. Just being on my own was very different, I did not have stats, I did some things [reporting] for the Regional Chaplains, but, I mean, I kept no records of core members or their files...I was running by the seat of my pants really, it was a really good program, and I think we did really well, but it wasn't well documented. (Maureen)*

**From 2005 to 2009 there were approximately 40 to 45 circles coordinated with Maureen as a coordinator and Bernie Martens.**

During this time, the contract to run the site was about \$23,000.00, and at one point the site had nine core members. On this type of budget Maureen notes “I didn’t do everything I needed to do, including sitting on circles on a regular basis.”

However, by October 2009 at the start of the National Demonstration project the number of core members was down to four. This was due to the fact that more and more offenders were being given LTSOs, which come with residency requirements in a halfway house. The only halfway houses were in Vancouver, and so most offenders were outside the geographic area of the site. Given this state of affairs across the country, it was deemed necessary to expand the CoSA mandate to include WED LTSO offenders.

The start of the National Demonstration Project brought about many changes within the site. In April 2010, CSC Chaplaincy asked Fraser

Valley to expand their site to include Vancouver. Vancouver previously had its own site run by Rhodes College since 2004, but six months into the National Demonstration Project Rhodes College chose to not renew their contract with CSC Chaplaincy. This site came with three core members, two circle volunteers, and doubled the geographic spread of the site. Fortunately, with the funding from the National Demonstration Project, the VFV was able to hire two circle coordinators – Frank Sawatsy and Germaine Solaiman, and a data coordinator – Linnea Groom.

In April 2010, with three additional staff members, managing the geographic spread was feasible. At this time, Maureen was taking care of the Fraser Valley area, Germaine was taking care of downtown Vancouver, and Frank was taking care of downtown Surrey and downtown Vancouver. At this time, Frank and Germaine’s CoSA responsibilities included supervising circles in their respective areas, assisting with volunteer training, and raising the profile of CoSA through presentations to community, educational, and faith groups. As the Project Manager, Maureen is responsible for supervising, coordinating, and implementing the CoSA project as a whole. This includes managing the staff and volunteers, overseeing all circle groups through attendance every other month, recruiting and screening core members and circle volunteers, planning and delivering training to volunteers, liaising with institutional staff, raising the profile of CoSA through presentations to community, educational, police, and faith groups, planning and overseeing the implementation of program events, ensuring effective governance practices with advisory board members, and maintaining open communication with funding bodies. Additionally, with the National Demonstration Project funding, the site staff were able to write job descriptions, organize better administration, and develop volunteer training materials. With the addition of Linnea, the project was better able to maintain up-to-date documentation, a database, files for all volunteers, core members, and staff members,



and lists of community resources. Additionally, the data coordinator assists with the reporting requirements for the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC), supports evaluation activities, and provides support for planning, organizing, and implementing program events.

Despite the additional staff, managing the geographic spread continues to be a challenge. This site spans 150km, and this affects every aspect of the project from maintaining relationships with probation and parole, recruiting circle volunteers according to the area in which a new core member will be released, making arrangements for suitable meeting locations that fit the budget, location, and availability of core members and circle volunteers, and hosting training sessions in an accessible location for all circle volunteers. An additional challenge is maintaining a unified program.

Within the last year, this site has moved to a more volunteer centered and empowered model of CoSA. In this model, the circle coordinators no longer supervise circles. Instead, volunteers are encouraged to take the lead and run the circles, and the project manager or circle coordinator visits on a monthly basis to ensure everything is running smoothly. When a circle is just starting out, or if the core member is thought to be high risk, the circle will be more heavily supervised. This model frees up the time of the circle coordinators so they can focus on recruiting volunteers, maintaining community connections, and further developing training sessions. Frank notes,

*I really appreciated being able to be in the circles a lot in the first two years. I learned a lot about the circle dynamics and about the guys and actually I have a really good relationship with each of them and also...it helps the volunteers, they really appreciate that they know someone who understands what's going on and what their problems are. [Now] I spend my time more solving problems and encouraging volunteers, and meeting them one on one, or talking to them, and also more time in training, more time recruiting volunteers.*

Volunteer empowerment is important for the survival of CoSA. At the end of 2014, when the National Demonstration Project funding terminates, there will only be funding for slightly less than one full time position which will end March 2015. The project manager will not have the time to directly supervise the circles, and will have to focus on implementing the program. As Maureen points out, “CoSAs are not going to survive unless we have more volunteer empowerment. I really trust volunteer empowerment, and [this] was really the original model of CoSA”. In Maureen’s experience, when given the opportunity, volunteers will take the lead and the circle will develop its own personality in the absence of supervision.

### **Volunteer Empowerment**

*[The volunteers] say ‘Maureen, you know we don’t know what we’re doing well enough, we can’t be doing that’. And I say ‘well, if there is any problem you call me, but I will not be coming’. And you know what? When I go back in a couple of months, yes, there’s a few things to straighten out, but they’ve taken the leadership. And as long as I would sit there they’d be asking me ‘well what do you think?’ and ‘how should we do this?’ I usually find when you leave them, one will take on the role of being the challenger when I’m not there, another will take on the role of being compassionate, another of helping them with practical needs. But I think you have to let the group develop its own personality, and only show up when there is a problem. (Maureen)*

This site has always abided by the strict eligibility criteria for CoSA: core members must have reached their WED date. Prior to the National Demonstration Project funding, WED offenders with an LTSO were ineligible because they were not considered the most high-needs, as offenders with an LTSO had access to more services (e.g., housing, food, counselling) than WED offenders. To be part of the National Demonstration it was necessary to expand the criteria to WED offenders with an LTSO in order to increase numbers. CSC is saying it is possible that in the future there may

be some small funding for WED LTSO releases but not for other WED releases. VFV CoSA is in the process of looking for new funding for released sex offenders.

## SITE FEATURES

### FAITH

There is a strong theme of faith at this site: the majority of the circle volunteers are Roman Catholic, the project manager is well connected with the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver and other churches supporting CoSA. Some core members come to want a spiritual aspect to their circle, and most of the circle meeting space is donated through religious organizations. This theme is not surprising since CoSA originated within a Mennonite church. But what is interesting is the role faith plays in site functioning and core member outcomes.

One of the prominent ways in which faith occurs at this site is through volunteer recruitment. Site staff have found it easier to recruit volunteers from Catholic churches because they already had a strong volunteer base active in the prisons. People of faith often find it easier to encompass the CoSA values and the belief that everyone can change, and live a law abiding life. Additionally, Maureen has found that they understand how to support core members through faith without trying to convert them: “They can understand we are here to help that person find their own, whatever it be, their higher purpose, their spirituality”. However, despite this reality, the site is open to volunteers of a non-faith background. Frank notes, “We don’t discriminate from people who are faith and who aren’t. I would say that probably 90% of our volunteers are from the faith background, and probably 10% are not. So there is no discrimination it is just that we probably hit more churches than we do universities.”

As well, if a circle volunteer is not of a faith background, they still need to be prepared to offer

support in that area in case their core member wants faith to be a part of the circle. Frank notes, “And so in fact, when I train volunteers who are not from a faith background I tell them they have to be comfortable for there to be prayer in the circle”. The circle volunteers also report that part of the reason why they volunteered was because of their faith and belief in humanity: “I am a catholic and this work called to me. This is something that I

#### Faith

*It is easier to recruit volunteers from Catholic churches than any other organization because people of faith more often encompass the CoSA values. However, “There is no discrimination it is just that we probably hit more churches than we do universities”. (Frank)*

Circle volunteers say part of the reason they volunteered was because of their faith: “*I am a catholic and this work called to me. This is something that I wanted to do; it is important to find the good in people because then they can change*”.

The core member drives the extent to which faith plays a role in each circle. “*What is interesting is that in most of our circles the core member wants spiritual guidance*”.

wanted to do; it is important to find the good in people because then they can change”, and “I feel that sex offenders are at the lower end of the totem pole – the untouchables, lower than murderers and drug dealers. But they still deserve our help”.

Within the circle itself faith plays a subtle role. Often there is a prayer to open and close a circle and in most cases this is welcomed routine, but even in the circles without a faith component, the core members do not mind the prayer. core members have stated, “*[The circle] starts off with a prayer, then everybody checks in. I am not religious but I respect the fact that others are. This prayer seems to put the circle volunteers at ease*”, and, “*Each circle starts with a prayer. I don’t like being preached to because it’s not my style, but the opening prayer and closing ‘Our Father’ is*

*fine”. Some circles go further to “mention what a prominent role God has played in the core members life, and how God lead him to lead a better life”.*

The circle volunteers also note that they work well together because of their faith background. They are compassionate mature adults who have the same understanding of what the circle is working towards “*because we are all supportive and all are Catholics. Our faith makes us gel together and support each other*”. However, sometimes there are bumps along the way to achieving a productive circle dynamic. As one circle volunteer notes,

*We had one member who had more of a church rather than human perspective on right and wrong. Maureen moved it around so he was no longer part of the circle. You have to be open-minded in this type of work, and not start using church mandated rules and regulations on people. Stuff can happen – people fall through the cracks, and now we have to bring them back to a level of understanding that it is not society that is against them.*

Despite this strong theme of faith, it is important to note that the core member drives the extent to which faith plays a role in each circle. One core member specifically requested to have circle volunteers of faith in his circle to support him. Frank notes,

*If that’s what the core member wants, he wants to be prayed for, we are going to make sure there are people there who believe in it and who will pray for him. So it is really determined by the core member.*

Maureen also comments that “Our role is to help that person find their best self and to keep the community safe”.

## FULL DISCLOSURE

Being able to take ownership of your sexual offenses is essential to being accepted as a core member at this site because it sets the tone for

the core member to be forthcoming, open, and honest.

The benefit of a full disclosure is that core members can then be themselves. As one core member notes,

*The best part of being in a circle is the friendship and the honesty. Most of my friends don’t know about my offense, so it is nice to talk openly. There are always secrets, on both sides, but [the Circle Volunteers] know everything about me and they understand me.*

### Full Disclosure

*[The core member] is never ever going to be able to know that [the circle volunteers] really care about him if they don’t really know what he has done. You can’t love someone you don’t know or be there for someone you don’t know. And the other thing is the accountability, and if he hasn’t spoken those words from his own mouth about what he has done then the onus is on [the circle volunteers] to start asking, and that’s not the way it is. He has to take the ownership for it. And it works really, really well. (Maureen)*

## BALANCE OF SUPPORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The testimonies of core members are overwhelmingly positive regarding the support they receive: the relationships developed between them and their circle, the way Circle Volunteers offer respect, guidance, validation, help with daily living tasks, and discussing the most vulnerable aspects of their personality and past experiences. So many core members are incredibly appreciative of just having someone to talk to, someone they can be themselves around.

However, while the accountability side to CoSA may be present, it often does not come across as strongly, and requires further probing and digging to reveal. core members report being held accountable in the following ways: “*these [Circle*

## Balance

Sometimes it is easier to be more supportive rather than accountable. So you have to be aware in your mind that you also need to hold the core member accountable. As you get to know the core member a bit more you can read them a bit better, so you know when there are problems, when they are not being forthright. There are times when things are going well and when things are not going well. It is a bit of a rollercoaster – so the balance of support and accountability changes. When things are going well the accountability aspect is much less. (Circle Volunteer)

One of the struggles for the circle volunteers is determining when they should be supportive and when they should let the core member be responsible for themselves.

To hold core members accountable, circle volunteers have to learn how to ask tough questions. This is done through ‘on-the-job’ training when the site and circle coordinators visit the circle to show the circle volunteers how to ask the right questions.

*Volunteers] don't let me get away with anything, I do play with some antics, but they cut through that. I do tend to get into the whole 'woe is me' frame of mind, and they don't let me", and, "The circle volunteers make sure I follow through on my commitments", and "I have learned through CoSA that there is a reaction for every positive and negative action, and that he has to be accountable for these reactions".*

The balance between support and accountability varies according to each circle. Often, in the early months and years of a circle the focus is on meeting the basic needs of the core member and dealing with prominent issues within their offending cycle. As one core member reported, “We talk about current challenges I have, but not any of my previous challenges because that is far back in my life now. In the beginning we talked much more about my risk factors and offense cycle”. As the circle becomes more established the focus shifts more towards

support, building relationships, and providing encouragement never forgetting why the core member has a circle.

One of the struggles for the circle volunteers, however, is determining when they should be supportive and when they should let the core member be responsible for themselves. One circle volunteer wrote in their volunteer journal about how he wonders whether his support for the core member’s every need actually encourages co-dependence, and the extent to which the circle volunteers should advocate for their core member versus letting them suffer the consequences of their actions.

Maintaining the balance is also a question of boundaries: to what extent should circle volunteers be involved in a core member’s life? The answer to this question is a bit different for each circle and circle volunteer. Some circles take the approach of simply offering encouragement and advice and let the core member do the rest, others are much more involved by helping the core member fill out papers and application forms, getting the core member’s name on employment lists, and driving them to various appointments. One circle volunteer notes, “Maureen is very protective of the volunteers and doesn’t want to see them doing things that are beyond their boundaries and role, or putting themselves at risk”.

Another difficult aspect of holding core members accountable is learning to ask the tough questions. Circle volunteers report that this can really only be done on-the-job, and that when the project manager and/or circle coordinators visit the circle they lead by example and show the circle volunteers what types of questions they should be asking. One circle volunteer notes, “Maureen comes into the circle to make sure we are in the right role and the circle is running as it should”, and

*We learned to listen to Germaine and Maureen... learned how they ask the questions. Months later we can come up with our own questions. The training was more hands-on, which is fine because the best way to learn is to have someone show you the ropes. At first I was not comfortable using this language, but now it is better.*

## SITE IMPACT

### CORE MEMBER IMPACT

Core members and circle volunteers report CoSA as having an impact in a variety of ways including living crime free, relationships, communication, and practical living. circle volunteers often feel it has been an “*eye-opening experience*”, but note that these changes occur gradually, often over the course of one-and-a-half to two years.

#### ***Living crime free***

Often, core members have strict conditions to follow as part of their release. A breach in a condition results in returning to prison. These restrictions can make life difficult for core members in terms of where they can and cannot go, but CoSA helps keep them aware of their conditions, motivates them to meet their conditions, and encourages core members to live a crime free life. One circle volunteer reported that “*we deal with a lot of the core member’s risk factors, and some of those aren’t even there any more. If the guy is on his own, who does he associate with? Who are his social influences? We [circle volunteers] are the main positive role models.*”

#### **Relationships**

A large part of CoSA is the relationships developed between the circle volunteers and core members. Core members typically have little to no support in the community, and have few, if any, people to talk to. In this type of situation it is not uncommon for offenders to feel isolated and alienated, which triggers their offense cycle. CoSA, however, offers them friendship; people who will listen to them, people with whom they can be themselves and feel safe speaking their mind, people who constantly encourage, motivate, and support the core member to be a better person. In this capacity, circle volunteers give the core member feelings of self worth and integrity, prevent the core members from feeling isolated, show them how to be patient with others, be responsible for themselves, have confidence, and to how understand the perspectives of others. In doing this, core members feel cared for, as one core member said, “*I never had friends who actually cared for me, who I am or who I was, I know I can do*

*better.*” And another, “*For loneliness they have been a major support.... I tend to isolate myself and the Circle Volunteers keep me from doing that. I can call them or text them at anytime.*” One circle volunteer noted,

*After each meeting we would reassure and reaffirm that we were there for him, we had no hidden agenda, and that we care about him. Slowly he began to change.... It is more like going to see a friend now. The core member no longer refers to us as circle volunteers...we are his friends. It has been amazing to see this change.*

The volunteer journals illustrate how positive and encouraging the circle volunteers are in their responses to the challenges the core members face. They focus on the good qualities of the core member and the positive aspects; they constantly brainstorm solutions and offer different perspectives. The circle volunteers model how to behave in social situations, and help the core members to learn how to speak and behave appropriately around women. One circle Volunteer notes in their journal how the core member:

*wanted to learn how to improve his ability to communicate with women in ordinary social situations. His first question had to do with how women think about close relationships. He explained that he had no memories of experiencing a mother’s love and that he wants to understand how women think about love and other related topics.*

Having a mix of the two genders in a circle allows the core member to develop relationships with women in an appropriate and supportive way. However, as one circle volunteer notes, this is a difficult accomplishment:

We are constantly repeating that his relationship with me and other female circle volunteers is only friendship and nothing more. He always seems to want it to be more. I’m not sure if he doesn’t want to get it or can’t get it. We have to constantly remind him that gestures are just friendly rather than romantic. My participation is important

because I have to model this type of relationship for him.

Finally, these relationships help build trust. As one circle volunteer notes, “first there was a lack of trust with us who were there to support him. [Now] he has said that he has never had such good friends, and how could he hurt them. Now he believes he is of worth.” One of the core members noted how difficult it is for him and the circle volunteers to build that trust, especially when there are changes in the circle: *“It is challenging when there are changes in circle volunteers. I don’t trust people at the best of times and when you’ve had enough people try and shoot you it is hard to trust, so building up that trust with new members is very difficult, that’s why I like the long term stability”*. The Area Director for the Correctional Service Canada reported that, “Unlike Parole/Probation systems that are legal monitoring systems and thus are always in an unequal relationship, CoSA can bridge the gap between the justice system and the general community.”

## Communication

Communication is a large part of developing relationships, but often after spending many years in prison the core members have poor communication skills, which can contribute to their isolation. A circle volunteers shares, *“He started to talk about his childhood, how he was abandoned, boarding school, etc. And slowly he began to show emotion: he cried, and smiled and they could eventually joke.”* As one core members shares,

*I didn’t know how to have a conversation after my residential school experience. I was very shy, I would walk with my head down, I wouldn’t make eye contact when talking. A group of three people was a big group to talk to. After being in the circle I know there are people who want to listen to me. This has given me the confidence to know that I can talk. Now I like talking and telling stories.*

Circle volunteers also notice the change in communication. One circle volunteer notes, *“At first his communication was dysfunctional, now he is more succinct.”* And another comments on how her

role in the circle helps the core member develop communication skills: *“My role is to be a supportive member, display listening and communication skills.”*

## Practical living

CoSA helps with practical things like finding employment, helping core members maintain good relations with parole officers, help with finances, developing a resume, and solving problems by offering multiple perspectives. One core member notes, *“They have talked me down a few times: I wanted to tell my PO exactly what I thought of her, and the Circle Volunteers talked me down.”* As one Circle Volunteer shares,

*When released, the core member was very nervous. The first few weeks were very intense with regards to all the things that had to be done like identification, bus pass, accommodation, doctors appointments, etc. So that added a lot of anxiety. Now that that is taken care of he is more relaxed and has a more positive outlook, and willingness to be involved. He now recognizes that it is going to be a journey in terms of moving forward, and that not everything will happen at once.*

The level of practical living support varies with each circle. Some circles do relatively little and instead focus on encouraging and motivating the core member to act for themselves; while others will donate household items to the core member such as rice cookers and teach the core member how to use it. Others go so far as to drive the core member to doctors appointments, help write resumes, help fill out disability forms, and help set up cable TV.

## PAROLE AND PROBATION IMPACT

This CoSA site has impacted the parole and probation offices in the municipalities of their core members. Initially, the geographic spread of the site made creating and maintaining these relationships (across the nine municipalities) difficult, especially since staff positions are constantly rotating. Over time however, the site has developed and worked at many of the connections. Maureen says, *“I feel*

*like this just gets better and better...I think we have a very good name within corrections and within probation... In Vancouver we are known everywhere... The director for Correctional Services is saying 'we need to be of even more help to you'".*

The Area Director of Correctional Services Canada commented that, "*Vancouver/FV CoSA has always sought to work with both the offender and the Justice system participants – Institutional corrections staff/community corrections staff in an effort to work collaboratively and cooperatively for the benefit of the community at large.*" And:

*Parole Officers appreciate the collaborative work of CoSA from having another collateral contact point of view, another set of eyes point of view, another knowledge based positive support person point of view and the assistance in keeping the community as safe as we possibly can.*

## **COMMUNITY IMPACT**

This site feels very strongly that the reason they have been successful is because the CoSA model works: when the people who have offended have caring people around them they can manage their lives and can stop the slippery slope of their crime cycle. One core member notes, "*I have been out for a year and my risks have gone down because of their support.*"

## **CONCLUSION**

Over the course of the Demonstration Project (2009-2014) this site has grown from one person "*running by the seat of my pants*" with little program infrastructure, to a program with four staff members, thorough program documentation, the support of the community, volunteer networks, and parole offices, site protocols implemented with conviction and the knowledge of what works, and a site that spans 150kms.

This site has trained 137 circle volunteers who are the backbone of CoSA. The fact that the circle is composed of volunteers is what makes CoSA special; it is what encourages the trusting and

honest relationships, and it demonstrates the level of care and respect the circle volunteers have for the core members that otherwise is not present in core members' lives.

This site has served 36 circles since the start of the Demonstration Project. The majority of the core members interviewed at this site attribute their success in living crime free to the support and accountability they receive from their circle.

*Having a program like CoSA provides that essential and critical link to the community for many of the most high risk/high needs inmates/offenders returning to the community and assisting them from a community grass roots level in their successful, productive and law-abiding reintegration. We know some of the biggest factors in an unsuccessful reintegration is for offenders to return to old habits – old neighbourhoods, old criminally oriented associates, substance abuse, old patterns of thinking/behaviour. CoSA is able to bring an informed, stable, supportive community citizen program to the offenders yet hold the offenders accountable and responsible for their past, present and future. CoSA serves to keep the offender moving ahead on the right track as they transition from incarceration back into the community safely. I think many offenders would have easily slipped through the cracks and returned to old lifestyles and old decision making habits had it not been for the specific efforts and work of the Vancouver/ FV CoSA Program. (Area Director of Correctional Services Canada)*